WILLIAM LINDSAY ALEXANDER

1808-1884

BY

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PREFACE

After experiencing a liberal and watered-down theology in the United States for several generations, the Congregational Christian Churches are now seeking to rediscover and reinterpret the theology of their heritage. As an ordained minister in the Congregational Christian Churches I too am in this search and came to Scotland to study ecclesiastical history to find perhaps in Scottish Congregationalism some preacher, churchman or theologian who could help to fulfil this need. I believe that such a figure has been discovered in William Lindsay Alexander, who was a preacher, churchman and theologian. He lived in the "glorious" Victorian Age, a period in many respects similar to our own time in the United States; an age of materialism, of secularism, of prosperity, of natural theology and of threats of war.

My purpose then in writing this thesis has been to make as thorough a study of Alexander, his life and his work, as was feasible with the time at my disposal. Then too, I have also desired to indicate so far as possible

the extent of the influence of Alexander, expecially as preacher, churchman and theologian, both within and without Congregationalism in Scotland.

I have not attempted to study in detail the controversies in theology or in church and state in which Alexander was involved. I have tried only to give an accurate and full account of Alexander's life and to examine his works and the ideas for which he stood.

The only biography of Alexander was written sixty-three years ago by the Rev. James Ross, and in it are to be found some discrepancies of dates and names. In studying all of the known works of Alexander I discovered several addresses, lectures, sermons, discourses and articles not mentioned in the bibliography of Ross' biography, namely, eight addresses, two lectures, five sermons, seven discourses, three introductions, two articles in The Evangelical Magazine, one article in the Secession Magazine, two articles in The Christian Herald, thirty-one speeches at annual meetings of the Congregational Union of Scotland, and two editorials, four biographies, forty-five articles in The Scottish Congregational Magazine.

I gratefully acknowledge with deep appreciation the help I received in preparation of this thesis from the

staffs of the New College Library, the National Library of Scotland, The British Museum, Dr. Williams' Library and Augustine-Bristo Congregational Church.

I have had invaluable help from my advisers, the Rev. Principal Charles S. Duthie, B.D., and the Rev. Principal Hugh Watt, D.D. It was due chiefly to Principal Duthie of the Scottish Congregational College that I began the research on Alexander, who was the first Principal of the College.

I am indebted also to Miss A. C. Common, a surviving member of Alexander's congregation; to the Rev. Andrew Graham, M.A., B.Com., who has kindly read the manuscript and suggested many changes in style and structure so that it would have no marks of American expressions; and finally, to my wife who has worked patiently in typing this thesis.

C.C.W.

Wethersfield, Connecticut
6 September, 1950

INTRODUCTION

By the year 1808 when Alexander was born there were only eighty-five Congregational Churches in Scotland. Some churchmen felt that there would have been more had not the Congregationalists required of their members that each should make a confession of faith in Christ and give evidence of this faith by conduct. However, Alexander and others knew there was a need for the Congregationalists as denomination. They were the non-conformists in the strict sense of the word and could not fit into the pattern of Extablishment.

> "The Church of Christ is a society of believers in Christ and each church is independent of all external control and has in itself the right to manage its own affairs under the guidance of God."[1]

Many of the Congregational Churches at this time were blundering into the literalism of the Glasites,[2] by exalting the letter of the law above the spirit of scripture. Baptism became an issue which was argued over. Robert and James Haldane, the founders of the Congregational Churches in Scotland, accepted the Baptists' views. Some of the churches split because of disagreement on matters of church order and worship. These troubles were inevitable because there were in these churches some who were Congregationalists by conviction and some who were Congregationalists by accident.

1. Alexander, Congregationalism, p. 9
2. The Glasites were the followers of John Glas (1696-1773) who defended the principles: that there is no warrant in the New Testament for a national church; that the magistrate has no place in the church and has no right to punish for heresy; that both the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant are without scriptural grounds; and that the true Reformation is one that can be carried out not by political and secular weapons, but by the word and spirit of Christ only.

An uncle-by-marriage of Alexander, the Rev John Watson, was instrumental in forming the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1812. The object of the union of churches was:

> "the relief of Congregational Churches in Scotland, united in the faith and hope of the gospel, who, from their poverty, the fewness of their number, or from debt upon their places of worship, are unable to provide for the ministration of the Word of God in that way which would tend most to their own edification, and the eternal happiness of those around them."[1]

The Union aided the continuance of home mission work among the churches which could not have been financed by single societies. In these days among Congregational Churches, every pastor was regarded as an evangelist, and every church as a home mission agency. The promoters of the Union never intended it to be a "denominational" institution that would include all churches, but, in fact, most of the churches did join the union. In 1857 a change in the constitution was made which stated that the Union consisted of "Churches of the Congregational order in fellowship with each other."[2] The fact that the churches in the Union were now a fellowship of churches gave it a kind of "denominational" status. Numerous amendments to the constitution were made in the succeeding years. A "statement of belief"

1. Constitution of the Congregational Union of Scotland
2. Ibid

of the Union, expresses again a kind of "denominational" distinction.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century the Congregational Churches placed great emphasis upon a well-trained and educated ministry. Alexander took a leading role both as a preacher and a professor in supporting this aim. In his youth there were many religious and political movements such as the Socinian and Apocrypha controversies, the anti-slavery movement, the abolition of religious tests, and Catholic emancipation, in which Congregationalists found opportunity for exhibiting their liberal principles. However, their relation to these movements was only of an indirect nature and consequently, there is no need for detailed reference to them except to remark that Alexander wrote an article in the Scottish Congregational Magazine[1] taking a firm stand against slavery.

The Congregationalists had an opportunity to declare their principles as Free Churchmen in the Voluntary Controversy in which Ralph Wardlaw and Alexander were leaders. The controversy will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

A revival of evangelical religion took place in all the churches in Scotland during the 1830s and 1840s. The Congregationalists at this time saw a change occur in their doctrine

1. W. L. Alexander, Duty of Our Churches in Relation to American Slavery, Scottish Congregational Magazine, January 1861

of the atonement. As they had been previously identified with the Calvinists holding the Westminster Confession, they now held the view that the atonement was of universal sufficiency but of limited efficiency.

In 1842, a Congregational minister at Hamilton, the Rev. John Kirk, published a series of addresses entitled The Way of Life Made Plain. Kirk held that "not only did Jesus die for every man, but God's spirit strives with every man, and they who yield are the saved, and they who resist are the unsaved."[1] He thus said that the influence of the Holy Spirit was as universal as the atonement of Christ. The promulgation of the "new views" as they were named, called forth much opposition from the Congregationalists, and many tracts were written in condemnation of Kirk's doctrine.

Alexander's resolution in the annual meeting of the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1845, while no doubt intended to reaffirm the adherence of the churches of the Union to the views of the Moderate Calvinists, was so expressed that many, if not all, of those holding the "new views" could have supported it, for there was a careful avoidance of any expression of the distinctive difference between the old and new doctrines. The leaders of the Union thought it well not to interfere with the differences of doctrinal opinion, but to let the churches

1. John Kirk, The Way of Life Made Plain

individually take such action as they thought proper. The only churches taking definite action in favour of the "new views" were those located in Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Under the leadership of James Morison, who held the doctrine of universal atonement, eternal and unconditional election, and irresistible grace, a new association called the Evangelical Union was formed in Kilmarnock in 1843. Shortly afterwards an impetus was given to the work of the Union by the cooperation of a number of ministers and students who had been disassociated from the Congregational Union of Scotland. Among the most prominent of these were the Rev. John Kirk, and the Rev. Fergus Ferguson; Messrs. Fergus Ferguson, Ebenezer Kennedy and James Robertson.

By 1867 the churches of the Congregational Union and those of the Evangelical Union recognised the fact that they belonged to one body of Independent churches. That year a proposal was made that the bodies of churches unite. Cooperation among the churches began and after a long period of courtship the Union was consummated in 1896. The Evangelical Union dropped her first name and took the name of the Congregational Union of Scotland.

From this general background of the conditions and thoughts of the nineteenth century, we trust the reader will understand more readily how Alexander was influenced by his environment and also how he influenced the environment. Although his years

do not coincide exactly with those of Queen Victoria, they are close enough for us to say that he was born, lived and died in the Victorian Age. As a young pastor in Edinburgh, Alexander rose to be the stabilising influence among Congregational Churches in Scotland. He was naturally conservative in politics as well as in religious matters. Even in the days of his youthful political enthusiasm, when he was one of the most ardent advocates of the Reform Bill of 1832, he never embraced the radical opinions of many with whom he joined. He desired the abolition of acknowledged abuses, but he was a strong defender of prevailing institutions in so far as their existence involved no public injustice or oppression. His conservatism in political affairs became even more pronounced with advancing years. Among the few statesmen who fully secured his political confidence was Lord Palmerston. Had a Liberal Party of the type which that statesman represented continued to exist after Palmerston's death it is probable that Alexander would have adhered to it. But he had little sympathy with the Liberalism of the latter half of the century, and for several years before his death he supported the Tory Party. In the political contest between Lord Dalkeith and Mr. Gladstone for the representation of Mid-Lothian, Alexander took such a great interest that he made a special trip from London to

record his vote in favour of Lord Dalkeith.[1]

The same conservatism marked Alexander's attitude towards religious and ecclesiastical matters. He often deplored what he regarded as the dangerous defection of English Congregationalists in their lack of emphasis on Calvinistic doctrines, and in their identity of political action with denominational movements.

It may be due to his disagreement in thought and action with the Congregationalists generally that in his later life he became less denominational and more catholic in his sympathies. Alexander had outlived most of the men of like opinion in the Congregational Churches in Scotland and England, and it was natural that he sought association and cooperation with Christian men of various religious groups.

1. Ross, W.L.Alexander, p. 294

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

William Lindsay Alexander's paternal ancestors date from pre-Reformation days in the county of Peebles. His father, William Alexander, was the only son of Robert and Susan Nicol. This only son was left an orphan at the age of fourteen and for the next six years until he was twenty was in business at Alloa and Lanark. While at Lanark he decided to study for the ministry. He entered Rotherham Theological College which was associated with the Congregational Churches.[1] But he had to leave after one session because of ill health. For some time he lived in Dundee and there became a member of the church os Mr. William Innes[2] who later was the Baptist minister in Leith.

In 1802 Mr. Alexander moved to Edinburgh where he joined the house of Messrs. Cockburn & Co., wine merchants of Leith. Here he became a member of the church meeting in the "Tabernacle" of which Mr. James A. Haldane, one of the founders of Scottish Congregationalism, was then minister. In 1805 Alexander married Elizabeth Lindsay, the daughter of a Lanarkshire farmer. The marriage took place near Edinburgh, at "Pinkieburn", the house of Mrs. Alexander's uncle, Dr. Alexander Lindsay.

William Lindsay Alexander was born of this marriage in Leith on the 24th of August, 1808. He was the eldest of two

1. J. Ross, William Lindsay Alexander: His Life and Work, p. 2
2. William Innes of Dundee Tabernacle

sons and four daughters; his brother and one sister died in infancy. He outlived his other three sisters, Susan, Margaret Jane, and Elizabeth.[1]

Writing in his Biographical Sketch of William Alexander, William Lindsay, the son, wrote of his mother that she was

> "naturally of a cheerful and agreeable temperament, and possessed along with this much force of character, a sound, vigorous judgment, great decision and firmness of purpose, and a quiet orderly energy, which enabled her to manage her affairs without bustle, confusion, or shortcoming. Thus endowed she furnished a fitting counterpart and counterpoise to the more ardent and variable temperament of her husband."[2]

In the same biography, Alexander writes of his father,

> "His piety was intelligent, sincere, and lively. With him religion was truly a life. He was a diligent and devout student of Holy Scripture, and sought to regulate his conduct by what it taught. He was a man of prayer acknowledging the Lord in all his ways, and placing his active life under the guidance and control of his providence. He had a vivid and constant sense of dependence on the work and intercession of Christ, and never spoke so warmly and so impressively as when the love of Christ was his theme."[3]

The father was a man of considerable natural ability, of sound judgment and common sense. His services were not confined to religious enterprises, but extended to civic and philanthropic ones as well. He was an ardent promoter of foreign missions, his interest having been aroused by a

1. Ibid, p. 5
2. W. L. Alexander, Biographical Sketch of William Alexander, p. 5
3. Ibid, p. 7

fellow-student at Rotherham, Mr. John Arundel, who later became secretary of the London Missionary Society.[1]

The first schoolmaster who taught young William Lindsay Alexander was James Thompson who in later years was agent of The British and Foreign Bible Society in South America and then subsequently in Madrid. From the tutelage of Mr. Thompson, Alexander was transferred to Leith High School, where his teacher was Mr. Bayne, a dominie of the old school who taught Latin and who thought that to learn Latin and enjoy it was the chief end of man.[2] Following Mr. Bayne, Alexander's teacher for the next two years was Dr. Hugh Jamieson, a minister of the Associate Synod who kept a boarding school at East Linton, Haddingtonshire. It was from 1821 onward that Alexander kept essays which he had written, the context of which reveal his interests at this early age of thirteen. Some of the titles were <u>On Truth</u>, <u>On Diligence</u>, <u>On the Advantages of Early Religion</u> and then in 1822 appeared <u>On the Existence of a Deity</u> and <u>On Emulation</u>.[3]

As a result of an accident in his youth, Alexander was slightly lame throughout his life. His early years were marked with much weakness and suffering. As a boy he is remembered by

1. J. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 2
2. Ibid, p. 6
3. Ibid, p. 7

his friends as having shown remarkable spirit, possessed with an ardent and impulsive disposition, somewhat shy and reserved towards strangers, but open, frank and affectionate towards his relatives and friends.[1]

It was when Alexander reached his fourteenth year that he entered the University of Edinburgh as a member of the Junior Humanity Class. By the year 1823 he had entered the Senior Humanity Class, the Second Greek Class and the Junior Class of Mathematics. The following year he attended the third Greek Class and the Class of Logic and Metaphysics, in which he was a prizeman. Actually, Alexander distinguished himself in all his classes and from all his professors he received high praise for his essays.

Concerning one of Alexander's professors is the story told about Professor Pillans who, in the course of an argument with some English scholars, contended that Scotsmen educated at the University of Edinburgh had sound classical learning. The Englishmen disputed this point whereupon Professor Pillan offered to set one of his students against any student from Oxford in an exercise in Latin. The challenge was accepted and Alexander was asked by his professor to represent the University in the competition. The exercise was to translate

1. Ibid, p. 6

into Latin an English version of a passage from Sir William Jones' Persian of Hafiz. To the great delight of the professor, young Alexander was admitted to be the victor. The English version of it which he used many times in his preaching was:

> "Once on thy parent knees, a new-born child,
> Weeping thou sat'st, while all around thee smiled;
> So live that, sinking to thy last-long sleep,
> Calm thou may'st smile while all around thee weep."[1]

Alexander had been, in the meantime, very moved by John Urquhart's glowing accounts of the lectures given by Dr. Chalmers at the University of St. Andrews. It was mainly through this influence that Alexander decided to leave the University of Edinburgh and finish his course of study at St. Andrews. So it was in the autumn term of 1825 that he attended classes in Moral Philosophy and Political Economy under Dr. Chalmers. Alexander also studied Mathematics and Natural History. During his second year at St. Andrews he studied with the Senior Greek Class, where he won first prize for superior scholarship in Greek Literature, the first prize in a competition in Greek verses, and also the first prize for the best translation of the Krito of Plato.[2] In all his other classes, Alexander won first prize in every examination that

1. Ibid, p. 9
2. St. Andrews University Calendar, 1827

he took. There were no examinations in Natural History, but Professor Duncan who taught the course was moved to say of Alexander that he had every reason to believe that, had there been examinations, Alexander would have been as distinguished in Natural History as he had been in the other classes.[1]

It was Dr. Chalmers who made a profound impression upon his student, Alexander. In a like manner the student made a keen impression upon Dr. Chalmers. The professor treated Alexander not only as a student whose conspicuous abilities entitled him to high respect, but as a friend and companion whose sympathies and aspirations were closely akin to his own. Alexander was a welcome visitor at Dr. Chalmers' home and often went with him when he visited the country villages where he preached and called at the homes of the people.[2] One of these visits is described by Alexander in his famous sermon on the death of Dr. Chalmers which occurred in 1847:

> "The scene was a low, dirty hovel,over whose damp and uneven floor it was difficult to walk without stumbling, and into which a small window, coated with dust, admitted hardly enough of light to enable an eye unaccustomed to the gloom to discern a single object. A poor old woman, bedridden, and almost blind, who occupied a miserable bed opposite the fireplace was the object of the Doctor's visit. Seating himself by her side, he entered at once, after a few general inquiries about her health, into religious conversation with her. Alas! it seemed all in vain. The mind which he strove to enlighten had been so long closed and dark, that it appeared impossible to

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 13
2. Ibid, p. 14

> thrust into it a single ray of light. Still, on the part of the woman there was an evident desire to lay hold on something of what he was telling her, and encouraged by this, he persevered, plying her, to use his expression, with the offers of the Gospel, and urging her to trust in Christ. At length she said, 'Ah, sir, I would fain do as you bid me, but I dinna ken how; how can I trust in Christ?' 'Oh, woman!' was his expressive answer in the dialect of the district, 'just lippen to Him!' 'Eh, sin, and' is that a - ' 'Yes, yes', was his gratified response; 'just lippen to Him, and lean on Him, and you'll never perish.'"[1]

Although the two men did not always agree with each other, we shall see more of their warm friendship in later chapters.

The period during which Alexander was a student at St. Andrews was marked by an event which had a direct bearing on his later life. The event was his profession of faith. That Alexander should have joined the Congregational Church while his parents were members of the Baptist Church and he had been brought up in his parents' church, indicates that at an early period he began to exercise that mental independemce which all through his life was an outstanding feature of his character. Although by joining the Congregational Church and signifying that he could not adopt the views of baptism held by his father's church, Lindsay Alexander always remained on friendly terms with Dr. Innes and the Baptist Church.[2]

1. Ibid, p. 15
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, May 1855

While Alexander traced his first mental quickening to Dr. Chalmers, his first spiritual awakening was attributed to the teaching and influence of Dr. Innes, minister of the Baptist Church in Leith. After Alexander had become a minister he often, in the course of his preaching, referred to Dr. Innes' words and deeds to illustrate many practical aspects of the Christian life. Upon one occasion he gave an example of what was meant by our Lord going about doing good. He recalled Dr. Innes' life as the nearest model to that of Christ. He said,

> "It was not only that Dr. Innes went about doing good, but he did it so prettily, so winningly, so unostentatiously, that the stout-hearted or the indifferent, or the men of culture, felt subdued and attracted by the good man's apostolic simplicity. He had practised the art of doing the right thing at the right time."[1]

At the time Alexander joined the Congregational Church in Leith, the Rev. Andrew Thomson wrote,

> "In October, 1826 two youths joined the Congregational Church at Leith: George Harvey and William Lindsay Alexander. Harvey became an eminent artist and head of the Royal Scottish Academy. The other became one of our most distinguished preachers and biblical scholars."[2]

The day when Alexander joined the Congregational Church in Leith was an important one for him and he himself records:

1. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, February 1883
2. Andrew Thomson, In Memoriam, p. 2

> "October 29, 1826 - Sabbath - A day never to be forgotten in the history of my life, the day on which I first made a public confession of my faith in the Redeemer, on which I was first received into a Christian Church, and partook of the elements by which are showed forth the death and atonement of the great Saviour. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. May God, the God of Jacob, the God of Isaac, the God of Abraham, the Father of Jesus Christ, and the Redeemer of all His people, help me this day. May His Spirit rest upon me, and may I be enabled to keep the vows which I have this day made unto the Lord, and to do something for His glory while I live."[1]

At this time Alexander was still a student at the University of St. Andrews though he was an active member of the church he had joined in Leith. Just before this great day Alexander had been active in the Baptist Church in his home town and it was there that he had preached his first sermon. He had also done some lay-preaching in the Congregational Churches near St. Andrews.

Though it may appear to us that by the end of two years of study at St. Andrews Alexander was entitled to some sort of degree in recognition of his outstanding academic achievments, it happened that at this time the University of St. Andrews changed the requirements for the M.A. degree. Because of these changes it left Alexander and many of his classmates without the subjects necessary for graduation. Thus it was that Alexander received no degree from the University at that time. It was not until 1830 that the University of St. Andrews granted him the M.A. degree.

1. Ross, W. Lindsay Alexander, p. 19

In September of the same year in which Alexander completed his studies at the University of St. Andrews we find him enrolled for classes at the Glasgow Theological Academy which was at that time connected with the Congregational Churches in Scotland. From this fact the reader would deduce that Alexander intended to be a minister, especially since we know him as already having done some lay-preaching. But such was not the case, as we shall shortly discover.

At the Glasgow Theological Academy Lindsay Alexander studied under two men who were destined to go down in history as outstanding leaders of Congregationalism. These men were Rev. Dr. Ralph Wardlaw and Rev. Greville Ewing. However, in December of this same year, a short three months after beginning his studies at the Academy, Alexander discontinued his student days for a time and accepted an appointment in Lancashire as classical tutor at Blackburn Theological Academy, the precursor of the Lancashire College which is at Manchester. He lectured on Biblical Literature and conducted classes in Metaphysics, Belles Lettres, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. For four years Alexander marked time, as it were, at the Blackburn Theological Academy. It was at this time that the restlessness of young Alexander's nature showed itself most clearly. It might have been the death of his dear friend and classmate at

St. Andrews, John Urquhart, in January 1827, as well as the death of his favourite sister, Margaret Jane, in 1830, that produced much of his feeling of unsettlement and despondency.

When he left Blackburn Academy Alexander had serious thoughts of studying law. His father, however, disappointed by this time with the restlessness of his son, discouraged him from pursuing this idea. It was a good friend of the Alexander family who finally discouraged the young man by saying:

> "Advise him against thinking of the bar, for if he knew the temptations that surround young men in that and my own profession as well as I do, I am sure he would not think of it... For a Christian young man there is no field at present which presents so many opportunities for doing good as the ministry of the Word."[1]

Alexander heeded part of the friend's advice by dismissing the idea of going into law but instead of finishing his studies for the ministry he enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh! This was in 1831. In the spring of the following year Alexander, after the mental conflicts of the former months, suffered a serious breakdown in health and finally abandoned the idea of entering the medical profession.

To get away from it all and to recuperate in health, Alexander went to the home of friends in Wales where he remained for a few months. While there he read a great deal, expecially Christian biographies. The biography of Robert Hall

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 42

made a deep impression on him. It was this particular study that seemed to usher Alexander into the ministry as his life's profession.[1]

Alexander was well enough then to return to his father's home in Leith. However, it took him two years to get home, for while passing through Liverpool on his homeward journey he was induced to tarry over the Sunday to preach at Newington Chapel and there he continued for nearly two years! Though he preached twice every Sunday while in Liverpool, Alexander did not consider himself to be a pastor but only a lay preacher.

Alexander's doubts about his ability as a preacher were a figment of his own imagination for the men who knew him also knew his talents. Rev. John Aikman of the Congregational Church, Argyle Square, Edinburgh, invited him to be his colleague and the English Congregational Magazine invited him to become its editor. Alexander declined both offers, preferring to further his education for the ministry. To fulfil this goal he left Liverpool in 1834 in May to go to Germany where he studied at the University of Halle and then, for a shorter time, at Leipsig.

We do not know how long Alexander intended to study in Germany. It may be that he stayed the full time he allotted himself or it may be that his restlessness was still a factor

1. Thomson and Jarvie, In Memoriam Sermons, p. 4

in his decisions. At any rate, he was in Germany only from May until August. On his return to the Edinburgh area he preached several times in the Congregational Church on North College Street which was then vacant. Thereafter, Alexander left for London where he remained the guest of Dr. Ebenezer Henderson of Highbuty College. There he stayed until the end of the year. In London he was engaged in preparing a translation of Billroth's Commentary on Corinthians with notes. This work formed a part of the Biblical Cabinet Series.

On the 22nd of August 1834 and again on the 1st of November, Alexander received letters from Mr. Adam Black of the North College Street Chapel, Edinburgh, inviting him to become minister of the church. After three weeks had elapsed from the time the second invitation was received, Alexander accepted. Thus began Alexander's long and outstanding life as a Congregational minister. Although he began his ministry in Edinburgh on the 1st of January, 1835, he was not ordained until the 5th of February. Dr. William Innes of the Baptist Church in Leith offered the invocation at the ordination service and Dr. Ralph Wardlaw preached the sermon.[1]

In the early part of his ministry Alexander laid down certain rules of conduct for himself which he faithfully

1. Church Minute Book of 1834 to 1862 of Chapel in North College Street, Edinburgh

adhered to throughout his whole life: first that he would aim at being a good and useful minister of the Divine Word, and not merely a great or popular preacher; second, that he would have the work of every day carefully planned out, so that he would never have what is usually called a spare hour; third, that he never would seek to do his work by the slightest help of a stimulant or narcotic (he smoked one cigar a day, but only one); and fourth, that he would avoid the temptation of being a preacher of sermons on great subjects, and aim chiefly at being an expositor of Scripture.[1]

The church where Alexander began his ministry was on the northeast corner of Chambers Street, Edinburgh, where the Royal Scottish Museum now stands. The membership of the church at this time consisted of about two hundred and ninety souls, but the average congregation on a Sunday was between seven and eight hundred.[2] Amongst those were outstanding citizens of Edinburgh. Some were Professor George Wilson, Sir James Harwick, Dr. Matthews Duncan, Alexander Moncrieff (advocate), and Admiral Ramsay (brother of Dean Ramsay). The deacons of Alexander's church were also well-known men. Some of those who served at different times were John Gibson, legal

1. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, July 1880
2. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 76

adviser of Sir Walter Scott; Adam Black, Lord Provost and treasurer to the church for forty years; Sir James Donaldson, Principal of St. Andrews University; and Sir George Harvey, President of the Royal Scottish Academy.[1]

It was often said that no minister in Edinburgh spoke Sunday after Sunday to so many young men who did not belong to the congregation, but who themselves looked forward to becoming ministers.[2]

Dr. Thomson in a memorial sermon to Alexander said:

> "When I came to Edinburgh a few years later than Dr. Alexander, I noticed that his name was already on men's lips. They had discovered that a man had come among them who was certain to leave his mark. I can well remember that his speeches on platforms were remarkable for their eloquence, and for the energy and fire with which they were spoken. In his pulpit discourses there was much that was suited to all classes and conditions of hearers. But his clearness of argument, his freshness of illustration, his evident mastery of whatever subjects he handled, the rich learning which he brought to bear upon them, and the literary finish of his style, as well as his effective delivery rendered him peculiarly adapted and attractive to educated men."[3]

When Alexander was living in Liverpool a few years before the time of our narrative, he had made the acquaintance of Miss Mary Tod Marsden. When he left he was engaged to marry her; but he did not announce this fact until after he had accepted the call of the North College Street Chapel. He wrote to his father concerning his engagement:

1. McLaren, The Centenary of Dr. Lindsay Alexander, British Weekly, August 27, 1908
2. Ibid
3. Andrew Thomson, In Memoriam, p. 3

> "I do not anticipate being long single if I can help it. The fact is, I am already engaged. This may perhaps surprise you, but I don't know why it should; for, though you may think it a matter in which you could offer no advice, I saw no need for consulting you for the mere sake of doing it."[1]

However, approximately three years elapsed before Alexander married Miss Marsden on the 24th of August, 1837 at Douglas, Isle of Man. This date marked Alexander's 29th birthday anniversary.

Alexander's marriage proved to be a singularly happy one. Naturally of a warm and affectionate disposition, he found much happiness in his union with one to whom, throughout their thirty-eight years of married life, he was devotedly attached. His own testimony regarding his wedded life, expressed in a letter written to his wife several years after their wedding day, held good from the first to the last; "Never did any man feel himself more entirely suited than I do."[2] There were thirteen children born of this marriage, eight of whom outlived their father.

A year after Alexander had become pastor of the North College Street Church he was appointed one of the editors of the Congregational Magazine and soon became the sole editor. If one reads the copies of the magazine which were printed during the years 1836 to 1840, the years that Alexander was

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 90
2. Ibid, p. 91

editor, he will see that a great many of the articles were written by the editor himself. Alexander's favourite subjects were Biblical literature and theology.

A great honour was conferred on Alexander in 1838 when he was invited by the committee of the Congregational Library in London to deliver a series of lectures. The lectureship

> "was established with a view to the promotion of ecclesiastical, theological, and Biblical literature, in that religious connection (the Congregational) with whose friends and supporters it originated."[1]

The subject of Alexander's lectures was his own choice, namely The Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments. He was deserving of this honour, for as early as 1832 he was well known as a Hebrew scholar and had published translations of part of Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar.[2] He was equally well-known as a Greek scholar as his academic record both at the University of Edinburgh and St. Andrews testify.

A year after giving the series of lectures in London, Alexander was invited to become classical tutor at Highbury College in the same city. It was a great temptation for him to accept the offer, for he had always an interest in teaching, but after much consideration he decided to remain as pastor to his flock in Edinburgh.

1. Alexander, The Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, Preface
2. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 97

During these years of Alexander's life his health again became poor. He had the fear of going into consumption and even believed he would die at an early age. He thus dwelt upon heavenly themes in his preaching and writing. Throughout his life no other subject had a greater fascination for him. As his earlier period of poor health came at a time of mental turmoil, so this period of illness came when his mind was being overworked in the church and in literary production.

From the beginning of his ministry in Edinburgh, Alexander was active in the fellowship of the Congregational Churches in Scotland. As we shall see in the chapter on Churchmanship, he was a leader in the Scottish Congregational Union and was frequently the defender and exponent of Congregational principles in Scotland. His influence was widely realised through his many years as a contributor to the Congregational Magazine and as editor. He took great interest also in promoting the cause of a well-educated ministry for Scottish Congregationalism because to him, mental discipline and scholastic learning were invaluable in the discharge of ministerial duties.[1]

In a later chapter in this thesis we shall discuss at length the Voluntary Controversy which prevailed at this time. Although Alexander was against the established church he was not so ardent a supporter of the Voluntary Controversy as many of his friends because he felt the views of his fellow

1. Alexander, Evangelical Magazine, February 1882, p. 51

independents were narrow and sectarian in the controversy. Alexander supported and urged the unity of the Christian Church and the communion of Christians. Always holding a catholic spirit in his relations to ministers of other denominations throughout his career, he held boldly and consistently to the principles of Congregationalism as these differed from Christians of other persuasions. When the disruption of the Established Church took place in May, 1843, Alexander joined the Free Churchmen led by Dr. Welsh (the Moderator) and Dr. Chalmers in their march from St. Andrews Church to Canonmills Hall, where the first Free Church General Assembly met.[1]

At the time of the disruption in the Established Church of Scotland, there was a threat and danger from the Tractarian or High Church Party of England to the evangelical religious groups of that country. It was because he felt so strongly the cause of evangelical religion that Alexander wrote in 1843 his elaborate work, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical.

In the summer of that year Alexander made an extensive tour in the north of Scotland as a deputy to the Congregational churches from the Union. He visited and preached in Inverness, Nairn, Elgin, Huntly, Culsalmond, Rhynie and Aberdeen. On his return to Edinburgh he learned of the death of his friend the Rev. J. Morell Mackenzie who had succeeded the Rev. Greville Ewing as minister of the Congregational Church in Nile Street, Glasgow and who had been one of the tutors at the Glasgow

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 116

Theological Academy. Not since the death of John Urquhart had Alexander sustained such a loss as this. Mr. Mackenzie and he had many interests in common and their characters and dispositions were very much alike.

In the autumn of the same year Alexander received an invitation to be the colleague and successor to Dr. Ralph Wardlaw who was pastor of the Congregational Church in West George Street, Glasgow. It appears that nothing could pull Alexander away from his beloved Edinburgh for, though he always held Dr. Wardlaw in high esteem, he reluctantly declined the invitation. Although he would not leave his pastoral work in Edinburgh for the same duties in the west, Alexander did fill the vacancy at the Glasgow Theological Academy which was created by the death of his friend, Mackenzie, and he served as a tutor 'pro tempore' during the 1843-44 session.[1]

The Morisonian Controversy which occurred at this time in Scotland greatly disturbed the Congregational Churches. Suffice it to say here that Alexander defended the Calvinistic theology of the Congregational Churches in the course of this argument. Much more will be discussed about it in a later chapter.

Alexander published his Memoirs of the Rev. John Watson in 1845* to commemorate the death of his uncle who was minister

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 125
* not 1846 as Ross says on p. 132 of Alexander's biography

of the Congregational Church in Musselburgh for thirty-eight years. Mr. Watson was also the founder and secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland. Alexander published two other memorial biographies, namely, Memoirs of John Urquhart and Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw. Of the three books, the last was by far the best though it, like the others, was verbose.

Alexander travelled eleven times to the Continent during his adult life. In the summer of 1845 he toured Europe and spent some time in Switzerland where he studied the state of religion. From historical notes made there, he published a book called Switzerland and the Swiss Churches. Although the account reads like an uninteresting diary in parts, it does contain a record of the church in Geneva during the Reformation days. As is true of many of Alexander's books, the appendix is most helpful and informative. This volume makes detailed reference to Jean-Baptiste Morelli, the advocate of Congregational principles among the French reformers.

At the end of the year 1845, Alexander was notified by the University of St. Andrews that he had been unanimously approved for the degree of Doctor of Divinity and on the 10th of January, 1846 the degree was conferred upon him.

Since his student days Alexander had been a friend of Dr. Chalmers and when the elder man died on the 31st of May, 1847,

Alexander was one of many who preached a memorial sermon in honour of the deceased. Principal Watt of New College says in his recent volume of Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption,

> "One striking sequel to the death of Thomas Chalmers was a veritable spate of funeral orations. In addition to the hundreds that were printed, by way of excerpt or summary, in city and provincial newspapers, there were scores that found separate publication in full or augmented form."[1]

The funeral oration preached and published by Alexander

> "took a high place, and many believed the highest place, in regard to accurate analysis of the character of Dr. Chalmers, his mental ability, his eloquence, and his Christian excellence."[2]

An eloquent passage from this sermon will be mentioned later in this account under Alexander's preaching.

A few months after the death of his mother, his aunt, the widow of the Rev. John Watson, died. By her death Alexander became the heir of the house and land of Pinkieburn. He and his family moved to this estate early in 1849. Here he lived for the remainder of his life. Pinkieburn was an attractive house standing on a knoll which commanded a view of the town of Musselburgh to the east and the rolling hills to the south and west and the Firth of Forth to the north.

In autumn of 1849 Alexander was again faced with an invitation to leave Edinburgh to become principal and professor

1. Watt, Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption, p. 345
2. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 144

of Church History and Biblical Interpretation of New College, London. As in the other decisions he was called upon to make in reference to new occupations, after much thought pro and con he decided to remain with his church in Edinburgh. Twelve years later Alexander was asked once more to fill this position in London, and once again after much deliberation and temptation he declined the offer.

The evidence makes it appear that Alexander had a serious desire to become a teacher providing he did not have to leave his native city to do so. A few years later, in 1852 to be exact, Alexander applied for the professorship of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. This chair had been gifted to the University by the Town Council of Edinburgh and although Alexander was recommended to the post by many individuals, it was the Rev. P. C. Macdougall, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the Free Church College, who received the coveted appointment.[1]

Alexander did get another opportunity to teach, but combined this with his ministerial duties, when he was invited to take Dr. Wardlaw's place in the chair of theology in the Glasgow Theological Academy. He accepted this post, but he taught his classes in Edinburgh! Fortunately for Alexander, the following year the Academy moved to George Square in Edinburgh and the name was changed to the Theological Hall of

1. E.T.McLaren, The British Weekly, August 27, 1908, p.486

the Congregational Churches in Scotland.

It is not to be assumed that Alexander's mind was occupied only with his pastoral duties and a desire to be a teacher. He kept up his activities in the literary field and it was at this time that he published his treatise, Christ and Christianity. This volume was called forth by the prevalence of the theories of Strauss who doubted the historical truth of the narratives of the four Gospels. It was a scholarly work written in a dialectical style defending the authentic narratives of the first four books of the New Testament. Alexander's book had a large circulation both in Britain and abroad.

When the name of Alexander's church was changed from the North College Street Chapel to the Argyle Square Chapel he and many of the parishioners desired a new building. Circumstances were in their favour for the government desired to acquire the land on which the present church stood and there build the Industrial Museum. The government's proposition met with approval and the church and land were sold for £2,000 in 1855.[1] For the next six years the congregation worshipped in Queen Street Hall where Alexander's popularity as a preacher grew even greater. Later in his life he looked back on these six years as the happiest period of his ministry.

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 165

The site chosen for the new church was on the east side of George IV Bridge near Chambers Street and the building was begun in 1856. The church was not completed until November, 1861 and was named Augustine at the suggestion of Alexander who venerated that Christian father.

Still another interest of Alexander's came to the fore when in 1858 he edited a new hymnal, A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship in Christian Churches. He himself had written several hymns the titles of some being, Praise to Christ; Let There be Light; and Sanct Augustini Desiderium. The book, in Alexander's own words, "called freely from all available sources, without respect to party distinctions."[1]

Probably the most difficult literary task of Alexander's was the editing of the third publication of Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Knowledge. This work and the fact that he had been acting as one of the secretaries to the Palestine Exploration Fund aroused in him the desire to travel to Palestine and in 1869 he set out on a trip to that land.

As a result of his success in the field of Old Testament together with his knowledge of the Hebrew language, Alexander was given the honour of being a member of the committee appointed to revise the Bible. He worked on this task for the next fourteen years.

1. Alexander, A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship in Christian Churches, preface

In addition to Alexander's activities already mentioned, his career was full of yet other interests. He was appointed examiner for four years in the course of Mental Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews. The University of Edinburgh appointed him assessor to the university court for four years and to this position he was re-elected for another four year term in 1875. The same year he was elected president of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh University.[1] In addition Alexander was one of the managers of the Evangelical Magazine, a director of the London Missionary Society, and a corresponding member of the American Board of Foreign Missions, a fellow and vice-president of the Royal Society for seven years, and a fellow of the Royal Antiquarian Society.

On the 15th October, 1875 Alexander's marriage of thirty-eight years was brought to a close by the death of Mrs. Alexander. In her memory he composed:

"Though death hath taken thee, and though in vain
I sigh to touch thy hand and hear thy voice,
Thou art not lost to me; thy beauteous form,
Thy wise and gentle words, thy loving ways,
Abide with me; and in the quiet hour
Of silent thought I commune with thee still,
Ev'n as when hand in hand and heart with heart,
We trod life's paths together, loving and loved.
Death cannot sever those whom love hath joined,
And so, my own sweet wife, thou'rt still to me
A living presence, though I see thee not
And when a few short years at most have passed -
It may be sooner - through the grace of Him

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 213

Whose love sustained thee in thy long decay,
and made thy death a sleep, I too shall pass
Beyond the shadows; and in that blest place
Where death is not, and sorrow cannot come,
I shall rejoin thee, ne'er again to part."[1]

Alexander's career as pastor to the Augustine Church was long and distinguished. On the completion of forty years' service to the church, the members held a party in his honour and presented him with a watch and a cheque for £1500. Two years later in 1877 Alexander resigned his duties at the church which he had served so long and faithfully. His resignation did not mean that he was retiring from all his activities for he now accepted the appointment as Principal and Professor of Theology at the Congregational Theological Hall. This was a new post made possible by a gift of Miss Baxter of Ellangowan who willed to the college a £10,000 trust-deed.[2]

For the next few years Alexander lived a quieter and less restless life, confining himself to his duties as professor and a member of the Bible Revision Committee, and to the preparations of expositions of Deuteronomy and Zechariah which appeared in the Pulpit Commentary and the Homiletic Magazine.[3]

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 212
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1877 p. 370
3. Roxx, W. L. Alexander, p. 220

During the years as Principal he was conscious of increasing infirmity. In 1881 he submitted his resignation but he was asked to continue his teaching for another year, which he did. In the last two years of Alexander's life, letters to members of his family indicated the changing moods which he experienced. Sometimes he wrote in a cheerful and hopeful vein and at other times appeared deeply despondent.

The climax of Alexander's honours came in 1884 when the University of Edinburgh conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. This was the tercentenary year of the university.

Alexander was ill for a month before he died on the 20th of December 1884, at his home. His funeral was held at Pinkieburn House and the service was conducted by the Rev. G. D. Cullen and the Rev. J. Gregory. He was buried in the family plot in the Inveresk Churchyard where an Ionic cross now marks his resting place.[1]

The wide influence of Alexander's life was evident when the Rev. H. Parnaby said at the 1908 meeting of the International Missionary Council:

> "When visitors of other communions were expressing their debt to Congregationalism the one name on nearly all lips was that of Dr. Alexander, and not a few of the delegates to the council were pleasantly surprised to learn that a beautiful stained glass window was dedicated to his memory in the national cathedral of St. Giles."[2]

1. Scottish Congregational Magazine, September 1884, p. 113
2. H. Parnaby, The British Congregationalist, A Notable Centenary, 1908

CHAPTER II

AUTHOR

Alexander took advantage of all the opportunities available in his day to acquire a formal education and in the end he had much more university training than the average preacher in the Congregational Churches. Principal Donaldson said of Alexander, "His attitude throughout his life was that of a student."[1] He was an educated man in every sense of that term and he was continually learning. As an erudite and scholarly man he spread his talents far beyond the scope of a parish preacher. Before Alexander was twenty years of age he had become the classical tutor in Blackburn Theological Academy a fact which seems almost incredible to us today.

Early in his preaching career Alexander chose to study at home rather than to visit his parishioners and thus he expressed his primary interest to be that of improving his mind. In an address in 1843 to young men he said,

> "Mental cultivation is not only favourable to happiness, but also to virtue... The tone of our Christianity will very much depend upon the character of our own minds."[2]

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 255
2. Alexander, Responsibility of Young Men, p. 37

For thirty-four years in conjunction with pastoral duties Alexander was a teacher; four of these years he was at Blackburn Theological Academy; three in Glasgow Theological Academy and twenty-seven years in Edinburgh Theological Hall. During his teaching years he conducted classes in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Rhetoric, English Literature, Ecclesiastical History, Biblical Introduction, Biblical Interpretation, Homiletics, and Systematic Theology. At an early period in his career he had acquired a knowledge of the German, French and Italian languages along with the literature of those peoples.

Probably the most prominent feature of Alexander's teaching was his close adherence to the logical method. His mental attitude towards any subject was determined by the inductive rather than the deductive tendency of his mind.

> "His preference for the Calvinistic system, for example, was largely owing to its logical coherence throughout, and because he found it less difficult to harmonise the statements of Scripture with the general principles of that system than with those of any other. Concluding a survey of the Calvinistic and Arminian systems of doctrine he said, 'After all, gentlemen, the real point of difference between the two is whether it is the Divine will or the human will that is first in order in the turning of a soul to God, and who can decide that?' And although as a Calvinist he felt bound to assume the former in order to have a basis for a system of doctrine logically consistent, and in harmony with the general statements of Scripture, no one was more conscious of the difficulty of reconciling its conclusions with many of the facts and experiences of human life."[1]

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 272

Alexander excelled in the faculty of clear and forceful statement and exact definition. Very marked also was the judicial character of his mind.

> "I have always made it a rule never to go before my students with my mind undecided on any point on which I address them, for I have no right to go with my doubts to men who are probably looking to me to help them to get rid of theirs."[1]

There was little of the controversial style manifested in Alexander's teaching. A truly devout and reverent man, he seldom lectured without lifting the minds of his students above mere reasonings and arguments.

Ecclesiastical history which he taught for fifteen years at the Theological Hall was a favourite subject of Alexander's. It came as a surprise to many of his students who had regarded him chiefly as a Biblical scholar and theologian to find that he had read extensively in both ecclesiastical and secular history in ancient and modern times.

In the course of lecturing when he came to an eopch in which had lived a great man, Alexander would turn aside from general history and include an interesting anecdote or two relative to the individual. These excursive sketches exhibited not only a thoroughly human and Christian understanding but also manifested very clearly his preferred method of dealing with historical research. So that his students would maintain a deeper interest, he urged them to learn all they could about

1. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1877

a particular person in a period and thus acquire a focus in history rather than reading it merely as a chronological record of events.

Alexander spread his scholarship to many branches of study. As an author he wrote in the field of biography, history, theology, homiletics, hymnology and poetry. He produced travelogues and commentaries, and contributed articles to the Encyclopedia Britannica. He was determined in his authorship not to write down to the understanding of the masses but to bring all the resources of his scholarship into his books. Naturally he appealed more to the intelligence than to the emotions of his readers and this may be one reason why his volumes were not so popular as his pulpit orations.

At the age of thirty-seven Alexander wrote a biography, The Memoirs of the Rev. John Watson. Even though he was a favourite nephew of Watson, Alexander must have had some misgivings about writing the memoirs for he said, "Perhaps it be judged I have spent too many words on a private man whose life was not remarkable."[1] Eleven years later he wrote an excellent biography of a friend and colleague, the Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw. Not only was this a narrative of the man but it was also a study of Congregationalism during the early nineteenth century. A third memorial

1. Alexander, Congregational Magazine, July 1845, p. 337

work from his pen was the short Biographical Sketch of William Alexander, his father.

In the field of ecclesiastical history Alexander wrote for the Religious Tract Society, London, two volumes which, according to the preface in one, was to be

> "Original; from the pens of authors of ability in their respective departments in literature and science: Scriptural; in the principles in which they are written: Popular in their style; so that instead of being limited to one class of the community, they may be generally acceptable: Portable; that they may serve as 'hand-books' abroad and at home: And economical."[1]

The first of these was Iona (1850) which presents a well documented account of the history of that island from the days of the Druids. The other volume, The Ancient British Church, was published posthumously in 1889 in a new and revised edition. The latter was an enquiry into Christianity in Britain previous to the establishment of the Heptarchy. Some lesser works of historical interest appeared in The Sunday Magazine including Book Town of the Anakim, a story about Caleb. In addition, there was an essay setting forth the value of books part of which says

> "A book is a sort of sacred thing, an almost awful thing if one thinks of it. What a power words have to move men's minds; to stir the soul from its very depths; to arouse the storms of passion; to evoke the latent energies; to guide, instruct and rule; or to soothe and calm the agitated spirit, even as one word spoken by Him who was Himself the Word - the embodied essence and revealing manifestation of God... Who can estimate the masses of

1. Preface of W. L. Alexander's, Iona

power which thus lie in every volume that is worthily written."[1]

Heroes and Martyrs of the Reformation in Italy was a series in six parts published in 1866 describing the role played by the Waldenses in the Italian Reformation. Aonio Paleiro,[2] A biography of the Italian reformer, was another historical work by Alexander. He claims that Paleiro was the author of Beneficio (1542).[3]

When Alexander was thirty-four years old he was invited to deliver the Congregational Lecture in London on The Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments. The lectures were published in 1841 and present a scholarly exhibition of the arguments which may be adduced to prove the harmony existing between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. The subject has a theme of vast importance in its bearing upon the evidence of revealed religion at large and upon some of the neological theories which were present in Germany, and upon the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the character and advent of the Messiah. Alexander devoted much labour in demolishing the anti-Messianic doctrines of the German school and cleared up

1. Alexander, Book-Town of the Anakim, Sunday Magazine, May 1865
2. Ross in his Bibliography of W. L. Alexander errs by naming Aonio Paleiro as Paleiro-Saleior.
3. Alexander, Aonio-Paleiro, Sunday Magazine, September 1867

the meaning of many prophecies concerning Christ. The editor of The Evangelical Magazine said of Christ and Christianity which was published in 1854,

> "The book is declared to be the clearest, the most powerful, the most triumphant argument for the truth of Christianity, which this or any other age has produced."[1]

Alexander's work was a reply to an earlier publication in Germany by David Friedrich Strauss, The Life of Jesus Critically Worked At. Strauss placed his own position as being "mythical" in contrast with the views of orthodoxy and rationalism. His method was to apply the principle of myth to the whole extent of the life of Jesus, and to find imaginary narratives or at least embellishments scattered throughout all aspects of His life. As Otto Pfleiderer said:

> "Strauss had deluded himself in the fundamental error of Hegelian philosophy to supposing that the truth of religion consists in the logical consciousness of metaphysical relations, thus totally overlooking its actual nature, consisting as it does in emotional and volitional processes."[2]

Alexander's keen mastery of logic aided him in his theological attack in disclosing the error of Strauss' thesis.

In the year of the Disruption one of Alexander's most important works, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, appeared. He was led to write it because of the danger to which evangelical religion was exposed at this time. In the preface to the book he states the important question which engaged his attention.

1. Editor, The Evangelical Magazine, Vol. 32, 1854
2. Pfleiderer, Development of Theology, p. 218

> "Divested of circumstantials, the great question at issue is simply this, Does Christianity depend upon the Church as a visible body, or does the Church depend upon Christianity? Now, a question like this obviously goes to the very bottom of our religious and ethical systems."[1]

The two leading questions in this work are, What is the Church? and, What are its powers? In answering, he discussed in his usual thorough and elaborate manner the rule of religious faith and practice, the "Holy Catholic Church", the functions and claims of the Christian ministry and the requirements for Christian discipleship. Although the primary aim of the volume was to expose the pretentious claims of the Anglo-Catholic party in the Church of England, Alexander also states his views as to what he feels church polity should be.

The Connection and Harmony of the Old and the New Testaments, Christ and Christianity, and Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical were Alexander's three most important publications. Another, included in his Biblical Theological writings was A System of Biblical Theology, in two volumes, which were his lecture notes to his students at the Theological Hall. This work was published posthumously in 1888 and was edited by one of his students, James Ross. Alexander found full scope for the exercise of the two mental processes required in the study of Biblical Theology, namely, a careful interpretation of scripture and educing from the passages explained the general truths or principles. The combination of an accomplished exegete and a capable logician marked him as a unique teacher of theology.

1. Alexander, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, Preface

Alexander sought to show in St. Paul at Athens that the position which the Bible authorises and teaches is a medium one between the opinion of those who restricted God's Fatherhood to his special relation to redeemed men, and that of those who denied any such special relation, but rather maintain that God is not a Father to any in a sense in which He is not a Father to all.

Five volumes of Alexander's sermons, lectures and discourses have been published and some of these originally appeared in periodicals such as the Scottish Congregational Magazine. Christian Thought and Work (1862) is a volume of morning meditations, or short essays on Christian thought. Sermons (1875) is a work dedicated "to the office-bearers and members of the Congregation assembling in Augustine Church."[1] These sixteen sermons were published on the completion of his fortieth year as pastor of Augustine Church.

Alexander was somewhat of a hymn writer and poet. He regarded instrumental and vocal music as aids to worship and all during his ministry he emphasised congregational singing. He often introduced new hymns in his services and in 1858 he compiled and published Selection of Hymns for Christian Worship. For the collection he selected

> "only those pieces of poetry that properly belong to the class of hymns or songs expressive of pious emotions;

1. Alexander, Sermons

> also hymns that are suited for public and united worship. The hymns selected were expressive of good taste, consistent with good sense, and compatible with scriptural doctrine."[1]

Hymns which were adapted to peculiar or difficult metres were avoided and were arranged in the book according to their subjects. Alexander gathered hymns from nearly every section of the Christian Church.

For the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of the Congregational Union Alexander composed a hymn entitled Anniversary Meeting. The message of it implores God's blessing upon the Congregationalists. This hymn and the one called The Aged Believer at the Gate of Heaven express the heavenly theme that Alexander was so fond of using in his sermons. The latter hymn was set to music and published by Messrs. Paterson and Son, Edinburgh. Both were put in the hymnal, New Congregational Hymn Book which was used by Congregational Churches in England and Scotland. Sabbath Morning Hymn, written for children attending Sabbath schools at Argyle Square Chapel is full of the "other-worldly" theology and is hardly appropriate for young folk. Praise to Christ is probably Alexander's best hymn and it gives some hints as to his doctrine of Christ.

The theme of his eighteen poems, like his sermons and hymns, is generally that of death. He wrote a poem Bereavement on the death of his son Robert in 1844 and A Mother's Memory

1. Alexander, Selection of Hymns for Christian Worship, Preface

on her death in 1848. Several of his hymns and poems were published in the Scottish Congregational Magazine and Two Sonnets appeared in The Sunday Magazine.

Alexander found an outlet for his poetical interest in the Hellenic Society of Edinburgh, better known as the Blackie Brotherhood. Here he turned well-known songs into very nearly faultless Latin lyrics and some he printed privately for members of the society.[1] Upon receiving a copy, Dr. John Brown wrote to Alexander:

> "Let me thank you for the great pleasure you have given me. I have read nothing since Lord Macaulay's so good. I am quite suprised at your power over the grand and strong old tongue - 'Roy's Wife' - glorious, quite perfect. Now you must let me have six copies for my friends. I must send one to Gladstone, to Thackeray, to Stanley, and to Theodore Martin."[2]

During his lifetime Alexander made eleven trips to Europe and one to Palestine. He made notes of several trips and after his tour in Switzerland he wrote Switzerland and the Swiss Churches. The volume for the most part is a diary but it does contain a section which describes the history of the Swiss churches since the Reformation. This is what he observed of the condition in Switzerland:

> "While there is much that is dark and discouraging in respect to the religious prospects of that country for the future, there is something, also, that is hopeful and cheering. Amidst prevailing superstition on the one hand, and infidelity upon the other, there is a goodly company of true-hearted and spiritually-enlightened men who are supremely intent upon the progress of gospel

1. See Appendix
2. British Weekly, August 27, 1908

> truth, and the honour of that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We cannot but believe that a great work yet remains to be done in that important country, and doubtless God, in permitting the many trying events which of late years have befallen His church there, is by means of these, preparing His own way amongst its inhabitants. Does it not become British Christians to bestir themselves, and be helpful in this good, and useful, and honourable work? Britain owes much, under God, to Switzerland. Now is the time, if possible, to repay the debt when Britain is rich in gospel treasure, and Switzerland is poor. Let us resume this intercourse which, three hundred years ago, linked these two countries in so close and so beningnant a bond; when Jewell and Bullinger, Knox and Calvin, Melville and Beza felt and showed that though different in nation, in language, and in manners, they were one in generous sympathy with each other, and one in their devoted attachment to the cause of their common Lord."[1]

It is very easy to understand why Alexander was a contributor to commentaries. He was a Biblical theologian and had a marvellous command of the Hebrew and Greek languages. His most important contribution was the exposition of Deuteronomy in The Pulpit Commentary (1882). Then too, he wrote an exegesis on the Pentateuch in 1868 in The Sunday Magazine. After Alexander's death Frederick Hastings compiled from Alexander's papers the exposition of Zechariah.

Last but far from the least of Alexander's authorship were his contributions to the Encyclopaedia Britannica. In the eighth edition he wrote forty pages for the treatise Moral Philosophy which he discussed under four divisions: Rectitude, Virtue, Duties, and Happiness. In the same edition

1. Alexander, Switzerland and the Swiss Churches, p. 282

he wrote the article entitled Holy Scripture. This gives a comprehensive report of the genuineness, authenticity, integrity, and credibility of the Bible. It explains the history of the original texts of the Old and New Testaments and quotes the early ecclesiastical writers. In volume twenty-one of the same edition he wrote the article on Theology, which is a summary of his lecture notes as contained in A System of Biblical Theology. The essay on Calvin in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica written by Alexander presents a short biography of Calvin and a brief summary of his theology.

As we have already noted, Alexander was a scholar in the classical and modern languages. In 1832 he translated Gesenius' Elementary Hebrew Grammar from German into English, and likewise, in 1838 Professor Gustav Billroth's Commentary of Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians Volume I and II. In the preface to the latter book he comments favourably about the

> "modern school of German commentators. Their works are those in which the utmost freedom of inquiry is tempered and directed by the most scrupulous regard to settled principles of hermeneutic and exegesis, and in which care is taken that no part of the divine word shall be made to speak what is contrary to the general tenor of Scripture, or what is not fairly deducible from the language in which it is involved."[1]

Alexander would like to see the German view prevail among Biblical scholars rather than the approach of dogmatic exegetes who make the Bible speak like the disciples of some modern master.

1. Alexander, Billroth, Commentary of the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, Vol. 1, Preface

Another well-known German work which was translated by Alexander was H. A. C. Havernick's A General Historico - Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (1852). However, the most important German translation by Alexander was T. A. Dorner's The History of the Development of the Person of Christ (1861). Alexander wrote:

> "The appearance of this elaborate and thoughtful work produced a great impression in Germany. It was felt not only to furnish a full and final annihilation of the old Socinian pretensions to trace the root of their system to primitive Christian antiquity and apostolic teaching, but also to subvert the basis of that more recent form of antichristianism, which, presuming to call itself 'the higher construction' of Christianity, renounces with disdain all attempts to prove itself in harmony with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, and reminds all that men have been accustomed to take for history, both as respects the Founder of Christianity, and as repects the working of His Apostles and their immediate followers, to the cloudland of myth and fable. The work was thus one eminently 'for the times' in Germany; and there can be no doubt that results of a most important kind to the cause of truth have flowed from its appearance."[1]

Through his translation of these German theological writings, Alexander aided in fortifying the Biblical doctrine of Christ. At the age of twenty-two he was engaged in editing two translations of Dionysius Van Wynpersse's Divinity of Christ. In addition, at this age Alexander began contributing articles to The Scottish Congregational Magazine. Throughout his life his discourses on Biblical and theological subjects were stimulating and provocative to all the readers. As he

1. Alexander, Dorner, History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ, Vol. 1, Preface

was editor of the magazine for a number of years and a very faithful contributor it is important that we sketch a brief history of it. The Scottish Congregational Magazine with the exception of the London Evangelical Magazine is the oldest in Britain. The name of the periodical has changed several times. The Church of Scotland ministers and laymen were acutely aware of the need for evangelical work, and to foster it the Missionary Magazine was first published the 18th of July, 1796. The Rev. Greville Ewing and Dr. Charles Stuart were the editors. After the action of the General Assembly against the Haldanes and the "secession or extrusion" from the Established Church of Messrs. Ewing, Innes, Garie and others, the magazine remained with them and gradually became known as The Congregational Magazine. Contributors were Dr. Charles Stuart under the pen name of Philalithes; Mr. Ewing whose pen name was Onesimus; the Rev. A. Bonar, minister at Cramond; his brother, James; the Rev. Stewart of Morelin; Dr. Bogne of Gosport; Dr. Buchanan of Edinburgh; Muirhead of Dysart; Burns of Brechin; Cowie of Huntly; George Gowie of Montrose and John Cleghorn. John Campbell, the African traveller, John Ritchie, Edinburgh printer and Thomas Wemyss were also contributors.

After seventeen years the name of the paper was changed to The Christian Herald. In 1835 it became The Scottish Congregational Magazine when Mr. Cullen of Leith, Mr. Wilkes

and Mr. Napier of Dalkeith were the editors. Shortly afterwards in 1836 Alexander became a co-worker. Later in the year, Mr. Cullen and Mr. Napier withdrew from the editorship and Mr. Wilkes went to Canada, leaving Alexander as sole editor. A few years later Henry Wight helped him and subsequently the magazine was composed entirely by Wight. In 1841 the printing and publishing were moved to Glasgow and men there edited it. In 1847 Alexander again became editor and held that position until 1851.[1]

In 1861* Alexander began what was probably the most arduous task of his life, the editing of Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Knowledge. A few men from whom he had expected to get help were pre-engaged by the editor of Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. But instead of being discouraged by the overlapping of the two productions, Alexander received help from other contributors on Biblical subjects and went on undaunted to complete his task. He rewrote most of the articles dealing with the Old and New Testaments. With comparatively few exceptions,

1. Alexander, Our History, Scottish Congregational Magazine, Vol. 23, 1873

* J. Ross in his book, W. L. Alexander says on p. 188 that, "In 1861 Dr. Alexander entered upon... the task of editing Kitto's Cyclopaedia". On page 190 of the same volume Ross says, "During the seven or eight years in which Dr. Alexander was engaged in this laborious undertaking..." But the date on the third edition of Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Knowledge edited by William Lindsay Alexander is 1862

the biographical notices of eminent Biblical and theological scholars were also written by him, as well as all the minor treatises which are usually written by a sub-editor. Alexander was therefore not only the editor but he was also by far the largest contributor. It is no overstatement to say that the three volume work should have been called "Alexander's" rather than "Kitto's" Cyclopaedia of Biblical Knowledge.

Great care was given in Alexander's edition to a department which was very defectively treated in the original publication; the section on the religious and literary archaeology of the Hebrews. Special emphasis was also made on Biblical geography and topography as well as on the literary history of the different books of the Bible. A new feature in this edition was the introduction of notices of the life and works of Biblical scholars. The three volumes comprise those branches of positive knowledge which are indispensable for the understanding of the Bible, and its historical interpretation, including therefore, Biblical archaeology, Biblical introduction and interpretation.

In January 1870, Alexander had the great honour bestowed upon him of being invited to become a member of the Old Testament Committee whose task it was, along with the New Testament Committee, to revise the Bible. Alexander spent the next fourteen years of his life in this important task. His qualifications for the assignment were of a special kind,

for not only had he made the Old Testament a special study, but he also had an extensive knowledge of the various versions of the Bible. In addition, he had an opportunity to make full use of his knowledge of the original Hebrew language and to trace the history of each version of the Bible.

The idea for the revising of the Authorised Version of the Bible originated in the Upper House of Convocation, but the committee to do the work was made up of ministers and theological professors from many churches; Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists and a Unitarian. However, the Committee had no sanction from Parliament. The Old Testament Committee was presided over by the Bishop of St. David's, Dr. Thirlwall, and the New Testament Committee was headed by Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, Dr. Ellicott. The Committees met separately at intervals for four days at a time in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster. The men proposed to "revise previous translations, with a view of producing one more fully in accordance with the original than any of them."[1] They had access to old Greek manuscripts which had not been available for the committee of the Authorised Version who had only the "Received Text." Furthermore, the new committee had a better acquaintance with the linguistic peculiarities, as well as a better understanding of the principles of translation

1. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, Vol. 21, 1871

and rules of interpretation.

For an erudite preacher and theologian like Alexander, to be thus honoured in the last years of his life was the climax of his many years of useful service as a Biblical theologian.

CHAPTER III

PREACHER

"To preach and to teach."[1] These two words describe the functions and work of the Apostles as ministers of Jesus Christ. Nothing would be more appropriate to describe Alexander. It is in connection with the first word that we shall discuss him now.

The reader will recall that Alexander's father had studied for a time at a theological college. During all his life as a successful business man he took a very active part in the work of the church. It was not surprising therefore that young Alexander who was reared in a religious home by a loving father should have an early interest in the church.

He had exceptional advantages over his fellow Scottish students, for he was allowed to continue his college studies longer than the average. We already know that while Alexander was a student at St. Andrews University he did some preaching in the Congregational Churches in and around the town of St. Andrews. No doubt his friend and professor, Dr. Chalmers, encouraged him in this work, but it was his home town minister, Dr. William Innes, who had the greatest influence on Alexander's

1. Acts 5:42

choice of his life work.[1] Concerning his first appearance in the pulpit at St. Andrews, Alexander wrote to his father (24th April 1827):

> "I availed myself of your kind permission to assist Mr. Lothian last Sabbath afternoon, as he had been rather complaining. I did not read and I felt greatly the advantage which one derives from that trust in the Spirit which does not so often accompany read as delivered discourses. I chose for my text the expression of Balaam, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'"[2]

That same year he preached his first sermon in Edinburgh at the Baptist Church, Swinton Row, Elder Street. Although Alexander preached many times during his last year at the University he had not decided definitely to enter the ministry. However, in the summer of 1827 his thoughts appear to have turned that way, so that in September he entered the Glasgow Theological Academy. Alexander remained there only three months and rapidly made a transition from being a student to being a tutor in Blackburn Academy. After teaching for four years as well as preaching occasionally in Blackburn, Alexander left the Academy still unsettled in his mind as to what his life work would be. Drifting from thoughts of studying law, literature and medicine, he began lay-preaching in the Independent Church, Newington, Liverpool in October 1832. His desire apparently was to put his fitness for the ministry to a thorough test in order that he might settle the question

1. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, May 1853
2. Ross, W. Lindsay Alexander, p. 24

whether he would make this his career.[1]

Still a lay preacher, he was at first faced with some opposition from the congregation, but after a year with the people Alexander wrote that he had "to guard against the other extreme, and to repress the somewhat injudicious adulation I was apt to receive."[2]

He left Liverpool in May 1834. One important result of his experience in that town was that he was resolved to follow the ministry as his occupation. His eighteen months of steady ministerial labour there had made him aware of deficiencies that probably had not been so decidedly felt while he was engaged in occasional preaching. As yet, although he had read a good deal of theological and still more of Biblical literature, he had not gone through any regular course of theological study. While he had no difficulty in expounding Scripture, since his Biblical studies had specially qualified him, he does not appear to have felt the same facility or confidence in dealing with Christian doctrines. He was determined to supplement his qualifications by studying theology more thoroughly and systematically than he had done before. To meet this requirement he pursued study at the Universities of Halle and Leipsig, but only for a few months. He returned to Scotland in August 1834. This was the last part of his formal education for the ministry.

1. v. supra, p. 18
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, April 1876

On his return to Edinburgh, Alexander preached several times in the North College Street Chapel. He accepted a call from this church in November to become their minister and January 1835 began Alexander's long and successful term as a preacher.

He was ordained in the Congregational Chapel on 5th February, 1835. The ordination service was opened with a prayer by the Rev. Dr. William Innes of the Baptist Church. The Rev. Henry Wilkes, pastor of the Congregational Church, Albany Street delivered a sermon from Acts 9:31. The Rev. G. D. Cullen addressed the usual questions to Alexander regarding his personal religion, religious beliefs and purposes pertaining to the work of the ministry. The Rev. Mr. Cleghorn, who occupied the position of one of the pastors of North College Street, offered the ordination prayer which was accompanied by the laying on of hands by the ministers. The Rev. Dr. Ralph Wardlaw addressed the pastor, then the Rev. John Watson preached to the congregation. The service was concluded with a benediction by the Rev. A. W. Knowles of Linlithgow. Other ministers present were the Rev. Dr. Paterson, the Rev. Dr. John Brown, and the Rev. Christopher Anderson.[1]

Our day is comparable to Alexander's era in that there is a tendency in many branches of Protestantism to depreciate preaching as compared with the devotions of public worship.

1. Scottish Congregational Magazine, March 1835

The supporters of this point of view contend that by devoting a larger measure of attention and more time to devotional exercises there would be a greater return of piety and holiness to the worshippers. Though Alexander did not seek to undervalue the devotional part of worship, he always placed the greater emphasis on the preaching of God's word.

From the beginning of his career Alexander always made careful preparation for the pulpit. His chief concern in composing a discourse was to make the basis of it an exact and exhaustive exegesis of the passage of Scripture which he chose as his text. Whether the discourse was a sermon on a particular verse or part of one, or an expository lecture, he never departed from the duty he had laid down for himself, namely to make it his prime aim to be an expositor of Scripture. He was careful at the same time to avoid the extreme of making his discourses merely spoken commentaries on the Bible, a practice which he disapproved of in the case of Dr. Wardlaw and others. Alexander said that the man who preaches from Scripture will always have material from which to work; but the man who merely harangues upon certain doctrines and topics will very soon find himself prosy, uninteresting and unimproving.[1]

During his first year as a preacher in Edinburgh, Alexander attended the annual meeting of the Congregational Union held in West George Street Chapel, Glasgow, where he delivered an impressive speech in support of one of the resolutions and

1. Alexander's Diary, April 29, 1832

afterwards Dr. Wardlaw remarked of this twenty-seven year old minister,

> "After the eloquent, manly and splendid eloquence in which the first part of this resolution has been proposed, it would be folly for me to say one word respecting it. Allow me to express, and I do it with all emphasis of pleasure and delight, the satisfaction I feel in seeing youthful talent, genius, energy and eloquence consecrated to the cause of God."[1]

From an early period of Alexander's ministry the chapel was attended by persons of "all sorts and conditions"[2], and from every religious denomination in the city of Edinburgh, including the "Auld Lichts"[3] of whom there was only one congregation in Scotland, Episcopalians, and even Roman Catholics. Persons of high social rank also occasionally found their way to the old chapel. One of these who was not named in an earlier chapter was the Marchioness of Stafford (afterwards the Duchess of Sutherland).

The congregation of the evening worship became notable for the large proportion of men who attended. A Frenchman, A Roman Catholic, who afterwards became a regular hearer, exclaimed at the close of the first service,

> "What a number of men go to church in Edinburgh! In Paris only women go, except when there is some fine music or a grand mass to be performed.[4]

1. Scottish Congregational Union Meeting, April 1835
2. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 166
3. "Auld Lichts" were those who separated from the "Burgers" of the Secession in 1799
4. Church Minute Book, 1834-1862, Chapel in North College St.

Alexander was richly endowed as a public speaker. His voice was a clear tenor, approaching to bass, but of limited compass. It could be heard in the largest buildings except when he became excited and then he attempted to speak at a higher or lower tone than usual. As a result his voice became harsh and lost its clearness. His eyes and mouth well aided him in giving effect to the sonorous tones of his voice. His eyes, usually soft and placid, he often drew within his bushy eyebrows so as to give them a piercing expression. The mobility of his lips was very striking. In the facial expression of some emotions he was almost unequalled.

On one occasion, in describing the remorse of the sinner and his misery in finding the consequences of sin "as ashes between his teeth", Alexander parted his lips, and showed his teeth as if he himself were showing the disgust he was describing; and this was done with such effect that some members of the congregational were observed unconsciously imitating him, as if the ashes had got between their teeth.[1]

His other gestures were few and natural, for he made most use of his face and voice. Occasionally he would yield to an impulse of the dramatic order. In ordinary exposition of Scripture, Alexander's utterance was distinct and impressive although at time it became somewhat monotonous. Dr. McLaren of Manchester has put on record in memorable words his impression of Alexander's preaching:

1. Scottish Congregational Magazine, February 1885

"The distinct features of Dr. Alexander's preaching were so well marked and his sermons were so uniformly on a high level, that even a very rare hearer like myself received a very distinct impression. His appearance in the pulpit was in keeping with the whole style of his preaching. The tall, upright, dignified figure; the keen eye, the face full of nobleness, and not wanting in a hint of capacity for scorn about the mobile mouth; the sonorous, grave voice, which sometimes swelled into trumpet notes and rose high in expostulation or rebuke; the sparing gestures, and even the occasional signs of being ill at ease and disturbed by some movement or sound in his audience - were all but embodiments in visible form of the mental characteristics of the preacher. Perhaps the quality which most struck one in hearing him was the perfect lucidity of his thought, and therefore of his style... He was emphatically a Christian 'Apologist'. His great and constant effort was to establish the 'reasonableness' of the faith which he held, and in that field he wielded the resources of scholarship, of a singularly clear, calm, and candid man, and of an occasional sarcasm and contempt which pricked many an inflated theory and reduced it to very small dimensions. Scholarly strength, profound conviction, emotion held in check by a certain dignified shyness, a style somewhat stately and elaborate, but abhorrent of all tawdry ornament, the style of a fastidious natural taste refined by culture and clear as spring water were united in his sermons, which, while they never stooped to be popular, reached by virtue of their intellectual force, their sincerity, and their full freight of Scripture teaching, the minds and hearts of educated and uneducated in that unique congregation which his remarkable powers created and held together for so many years."[1]

In a letter received from a surviving member of Alexander's congregation, Miss A. C. Common of Edinburgh wrote of him:

"He was a nervous man and disliked any noise during the service. Once when a man let a walking stick fall with a great clatter, Alexander remarked, 'I wish you would keep those things in your pockets!'"[2]

She also writes of another scene she remembers:

1. Elizabeth T. McLaren quoting Dr. McLaren in the British Weekly, August 27, 1908
2. Miss A. C. Common, Letter to author dated September 6, 1949

> "On one occasion a member of the church who was a bookseller brought a friend, also a bookseller, from another city. At that time the hymn book in use was compiled by Dr. Alexander. The visiting bookseller had not seen it before and during the sermon, for trade reasons, he began to turn over the pages. He suddenly became aware of a great silence and looked up. Dr. Alexander was looking at him and remarked, 'When you are quite finished examining that book I shall proceed.'"[1]

Alexander's style of language and composition was partly a reflection of the period in which he lived. The Johnsonian example of editing was in vogue towards the end of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth. Alexander's love of classical studies was shown in his liberal use of scholastic terms and phrases, as for example in his memorial sermon on Dean Edward B. Ramsay. When Alexander was praising Ramsay as a great orator he quoted from Cicero, De Oratore, I, iii, 12

> "In dicendo, autem vitium vel maximum sit a vulgari genere orationis atque a consuetudine communis sensus abhorrere", what the great Roman orator denounces as
>
> "in oratory, the very cardinal sin is to depart from the language of everyday life, and the usage approved by the sense of the community."[2]

Alexander's love of sonorous words, of rhythmic cadence of sentences, and the long periods through which he was wont to approach some impressive climax, indicated the Johnsonian influence.

In every expository sermon there was usually one theme on

1. Miss A. C. Common, Letter to author dated 6th September 1949
2. Alexander, Sermon, The Good Man, p. 10

which he endeavoured to fasten the attention of his hearers, and his careful and clear explanation of the text would bear directly upon this subject. His sermons were therefore expositions, in the sense that whatever might be the theme of discourse, the basis of it was always a passage of Scripture fully expounded. His expositions were also sermons in the sense that whatever passage of Scripture was chosen he never failed to stress the leading truths or topics contained therein so as to enforce these upon the attention of his audience. It was for these reasons that his discourses had a double value and interest to the people. Each sermon contained an exposition of Scripture which to his listeners was acceptable and helpful in enlarging personal knowledge of the Divine Word; and in each was also set forth and copiously illustrated some moral or spiritual truth, having an independent value and importance of its own, and bearing directly upon life and conduct. Thus the elements of the lecture and the sermon were found in each discourse. Alexander chose the course of Cicero- clear, continuous, convincing, rather than that of Demosthenes - astounding, overwhelming, oratorical.

Let us examine more closely one of Alexander's sermons. We shall choose The Throne of Grace[1] which is representative of his method. The text is, "Let us come boldly unto the throne

1. Alexander, Sermons, p. 287

of grace" (Hebrews 4:16).

Beginning with the Biblical truth that "man is by his original constitution a religious being", Alexander proceeds in the introduction to ask questions about man's condition. Man is away from God and what is to be done? "Is there no remedy, no hope? Is man's way for ever shut up from God?" Continuing in the introduction, he answers these questions from various references in the Bible. He defines his terms, explaining "the throne of grace ".

Leading into the body of the sermon, Alexander names the four ideas embraced by the phrase, "God seated on the throne of grace". They are: 1) The idea of majesty; 2) of sovereignty; 3) of wealth, or abundance; 4) of liberality or bountifulness. The discussion of these four points is expository. His illustrations are always from the Bible.

A very brief section of two paragraphs concludes the discourse with a challenge to the listener.

> "Let us cultivate just views of God as at once a King and a Father - a King almighty and glorious, a Father full of compassion and tenderness. The privilege He offers to us is that of coming boldly to that throne on which He sits. In all seasons of gloom..., and not less when light, felicity...surround our path, let us frequent at the throne of grace...."

Like all the sermons in this book of Sermons, Alexander begins with a text from the Bible. Then after a brief introduction, he expounds the text in a simple form, usually

dividing it into four parts. Words of action to the hearer, conclude his sermons.

From the beginning of his career in Edinburgh, Alexander was recognised as a preacher of no ordinary power. We have already seen in the chapter on Biography the cross section of the people who attended his church.[1] Some of the attraction must have been in the preacher's fervid and impressive eloquence, but much of it must also have been in the prominence he gave to the careful and scholarly exposition of the Scriptures. He brought his wealth of learning and erudition, his clear reasoning faculties, as well as his ever-ripening experience, to bear with great power on his pulpit discourses. His delivery was calm and thoughtful and his diction pure and graceful. His maxim was never to preach on particular reprehensible habits, but to lay before his hearers the sinfulness of human nature and the plan of salvation in a manner fitted to convict and convince.[2]

As Principal Donaldson, a member of the Hellenic Society of Edinburgh, wrote of Alexander's preaching:

> "In fact, he was the most perfect embodiment of the spirit of the scholar that I have ever seen in the pulpit. He believed that the Bible was divine, that every word of it deserved the most careful attention, and that therefore the first and most essential requisite for a true theology was a true interpretation. He accordingly made it a supreme duty to do his utmost.

1. v. supra, p, 21-22
2. The Scotsman, Edinburgh, February 7, 1895

> to attain to the true meaning of the passage which he expounded, or on which he lectured. Some of his hearers would have dispensed with a large portion of this learning, and they did not care to hear from the pulpit a minute investigation into the signification of small particles. But it seemed to Dr. Alexander inconsistent with a belief in divine inspiration not to be eager to know the exact meaning of every passage. He had also the true scholar's modesty in interpretation. I should think he never treated a passage a second time without going over again all the reasons for and against such and such an interpretation, and whenever he found occasion to change his opinion he never hesitated to state that he had changed, and to give the reasons for the change.
>
> He had all the elements of a popular preacher. He had a splendid command of language, a fine imagination, a power to grapple with all the difficulties of a subject in the clearest terms, a strong sympathy with all that is great and noble. . . And owing to these qualities some of his sermons were among the most remarkable efforts of the pulpit oratory of his age."[1]

Themes of sublimity and splendour had an attraction for Alexander. From his earliest years he had shown a tendency to turn with peculiar interest and delight to subjects of this type. The grandeur of the Divine Nature in all its attributes was the subject of many a passage of stirring eloquence. He was very fond of preaching about heaven. Scarcely less prominent was his reference to the angels who to him were real beings engaged in ministries of love to men on earth, beings who were close to God. Probably the love of this subject was due not only to the power of his imagination but also to the fact that from an early period he had somehow got the conviction that his life would be very short.

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 258-259

Thus, the closeness with which he lived to the line of death gave him cause to dwell on the anticipations of heavenly bliss.

Alexander had been criticised by some Edinburgh people for being a teacher in the pulpit. At one morning service he said,

> "I have taught this congregation as best I could for forty years, and they have been willing to receive my teaching, and I would decline to become an itinerant preacher, going about like some 'gangrel body' with my poor paltry compositions in my pocket - I would decline to do this even at the bidding of the cultivated literary society of the nineteenth century. I magnify mine office."[1]

One day it was said within his range of hearing that English congregations would not now stand for long courses of lectures and that even in Scotland people were getting tired of long sermons. Alexander did not take notice of the remark he had overheard until a few hours later. He said,

> "Had I not been allowed, and, more than that, had I not believed my congregation relished the systematic study of God's Word, I would soon have ceased to be a minister; the dissipation of mind involved in hunting for two miscellaneous texts each Sunday would have been to me simply intolerable, and I would not have thought it right to do it."[2]

Alexander preached many funeral and memorial sermons for famous people of his day, including Dr. Thomas Chalmers, George Wilson, M.D., His Royal Highness the Prince Consort (1861), Dean Ramsay, Adam Black, and Dr. Alexander Duff.

1. E. T. McLaren, William L. Alexander
2. Ibid

Among the numerous sermons preached on the death of Dr. Chalmers, many people believed that Alexander's held the highest place as an accurate analysis of character, mental ability, eloquence, and Christian excellence. Few men had a better right than Alexander to be numbered among the friends and admirers of Chalmers. In a passage from his discourse Alexander said,

> "As Dr. Chalmers cannot be regarded as belonging exclusively to any one section of the Christian Church, there can be no impropriety in a minister of a different denomination expressing, in the most public manner, his estimate of the excellence, and his respect for the memory, of one in whose lustre the whole Church delighted to walk. In addition to this I may be permitted to say, that at one time I sustained to him a close and endearing relation - that of a pupil who loved as well as admired his teacher; that I owe to him one of the greatest boons a young man can receive from a senior, in the first awakening up of my mind to some sense of intellectual excellence, and to some aspiration after intellectual distinction; that I enjoyed, at the period referred to, much of his personal society and friendship; and that to the last I retained for him a personal affection and a respect which differences of opinion and oppositions of action could not destroy. And even were these reasons wanting, I should still have found enough, in the general esteem and reputation in which he was held by men of all classes in the community, to justify me in making this formal improvement of his decease. When a whole nation mourns the loss of its most illustrious citizen, it is permitted even to the humblest to cast his chaplet on the tomb."[1]

In this same memorial sermon we have a good example of Alexander's style which at times becomes very flowery.

1. Alexander, A Discourse on the Qualities and Worth of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., L.L.D., p. 6

> "Oh! ye men of literature and science - ye votaries of wisdom and benevolence - ye senators, and sages, and philosophers! would that we could gather you around the tomb of this man, in whose genius ye delighted, and to whose greatness ye did homage, and there persuade you to listen to the lessons that issue thence, enforced by the whole course of his life, and which proclaims to you that all your science, and all your philosophy, and all your philanthropy, apart from the love of God, and faith in a crucified Redeemer, will prove but the idle day-dreams of a visionary enthusiasm, which shall melt, and perish, and be forgotten for ever."[1]

As in all his eulogistic sermons, Alexander began this one with several pages of sentimental thoughts. The style of language in his funeral sermons has a touch of the Victorian detail and emotionalism. An illustration is found in Alexander's eulogy of Dean Ramsay.

> "And when at last the summons came, no convulsive struggle, no distorting agony, preceded or accompanied the soul's departure; all was serene and peaceful. The door of the invisible spirit had silently opened, and the emancipated spirit had entered into the joy of Heaven ere it was well perceived that it had passed from earth. After death, his features composed themselves into a statue-like repose; all signs of age and decay passed away; the wrinkles were smoothed from his brow; and he lay like one who in the vigour of life had fallen asleep. It seemed to those who looked on him as if they heard the voice from heaven saying, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.'"[2]

In recognition of his ability as an outstanding preacher, Alexander was invited in May 1874 to deliver the sermon at the opening of the City Temple, London where his friend,

1. Ibid, p. 40
2. Alexander, Sermon, The Good Man, p. 22

Dr. Joseph Parker was minister. Then in July of the following year, at the request of the British Medical Association, he preached a sermon before the members of that body in St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.

For thirty-five years Alexander's church officer was Mr. Gilbert Sloan who said,

> "I am the minister's man, and there were never words (disputes) between me and the doctor. I did my work and said straicht what cam' into my heid, and the doctor liked it."[1]

One Sunday morning when bringing an intimation to Alexander in the pulpit, Sloan whispered to him the startling news: "She's clean gi'en up the ghaist the day", and vanished. It was not until the want of the usual organ accompaniment arrested Alexander's attention that it occurred to him that the organ was "she" who had succumbed![2] *

Alexander was often spoken of as being Pastor of Augustine Church, but in his honesty in using words to express realities, it is doubtful if he would have used that terminology in describing his relationship with the congregation. On

1. Scottish Congregational Magazine, Vol. 23, 1873
2. E. T. McLaren, The British Weekly, June 10, 1908

* Sloan seldom volunteered advice, but when hd did it was always with good effect. On one occasion he was in the deacons' vestry putting coals on the fire when he heard being discussed the problem whether it would be better to take a special collection at the afternoon or evening service. Alexander had just said he would prefer the afternoon. Sloan turned from tending the fire and facing the gentlemen said, "The Doctor's richt - in the afternoon we'll hae our ain folk; at nicht there'll be a wheen Presbyterians, and I reckon them at 3 pence a dizzen."

coming to the Edinburgh Church he told his people that he did not consider himself fitted for pastoral visitation because he laid aside so many hours a day for study that it left him little time for pastoral duties. The appearance of a letter on Pastoral Visitation in the Congregational Magazine for November 1846 inspired Alexander to reply in the following issue. He had been severely criticised by many members of his church because he did not make pastoral visitations. He expressed his feeling on the matter as follows: "In a Congregational Church there should be a place and a duty for all."[1] The pastor should be the man of thought, of reading, of experience, and of dignity, who by the power of mind and character had to watch for souls, to preach the Word, and to rule the house of God committed to his charge; the deacon, the man of business and practical wisdom, should attend to the temporal interests of the church, and should minister to the needs of the poor. The congregation, including the pastor and deacons should help each other, watch over each other, visit each other and work together for the common good of all. But calling on the members of the church he held to be not part of the official duty of the minister except as required in his efforts to teach and to guide his people.

1. Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1846

Alexander had strong objections to systematic visitation as a pastor, or going from house to house at a certain stated time. He felt that it was the duty of the members of the church to instruct and counsel each other. He seemed to associate systematic visitation with the Presbyterian ministry where the pastors regarded themselves as having the official care of their people in a sense that was contrary to Congregational principles. However, he did not overlook the importance of pastoral visitation on special occasions such as in a time of sorrow or sickness. What he chiefly objected to was the regularly scheduled calls by the minister to parishioners' homes whether or not there was need for him. He considered such visits a waste of time which would be put to better use in preparing discourses, or attending church meetings, or administering the church sacraments. As his closing words on this topic he says,

> "To my brethren in the ministry I presume to say in conclusion - Brethren, let no such assaults awe us. Let us be steadfast, diligent, persevering, and we may rest assured that, however a few may carp, the great body of our flocks will rally on our side. By all means let us visit our congregations as frequently as weightier duties will allow. But we must remember that we are men of the nineteenth century. Our lot has been cast in an age of reading, intelligence, and energy, when men will not accept vapid declamation, noisy emptiness, or rhapsodical inanities for the realities and the rationalities in which the ministers of Christ should deal. To our books then, brethren - to our books. Let us be men of light as well as men of love. . .

> Let us be careful to give them substance and not shadows; wheat, and not chaff. Let the pulpit be our chief aim, the closet and the study our chief haunts. And if, through God's blessing, we shall be able, from Sabbath to Sabbath to enlighten our people's minds, sure I am they will never be so silly as to complain of us that we seldom 'darken their thresholds.'"[1]

I suggest there was a fundamental reason why Alexander objected to pastoral calling. He was always somewhat shy when in close contact with people and would often be at a loss for words. We should, therefore, keep this fact in mind when we discuss the duty of pastoral calling. The weekly visitation which he made to the hearts and minds of his people from the pulpit probably carried more spiritual counsel, teaching and comfort than he ever could portray in a house to house visitation.

Alexander believed that the success of any minister depended upon a happy relationship between pastor and people. He said that the relation between the two should be one of mutual esteem and confidence as well as helpfulness.

> "The whole Church of Christ is one vast family; and each particular church or congregation of faithful persons is a family. . In every such church, then,the law of mutual helpfulness must be observed. The people must not be without pastor, nor the pastor without the people. The one must hang upon the other; the one must assist and help the other."[2]

He felt that the ways in which Christian people may cooperate in promoting the work of the church are varied.

1. Ibid
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, March 1880

> "There are the young to be taught; the inexperienced to be counselled; the imperilled to be rescued; the wavering to be confirmed; the erring to be reclaimed; the perplexed to be directed; the mourning to be comforted; the burdened to be relieved; and those who are weary to be refreshed and cheered. There is the work in the Sabbath School - work in the mission district - work in the church meeting - work at the bedside of the sick - work in the house of mourning - work in the throng and thoroughfare of social life - work everywhere lying within the sphere of the churches' interests and in which Christian people should seek to do their part along with their pastor."[1]

Furthermore, he said that we can have no hesitation in saying that the chief duty and work of the ministry is publishing, maintaining, expounding and enforcing the truths of the Bible.

> "It will be seen at a glance that the training through which the theological student should be conducted is that best fitted to make him not a great scholar, not a mere expositor of ethical or religious thought in general, but specially a sound and able expositor of God's word."[2]

Alexander was the leader in the Scottish Congregational Churches who urged a well-educated and well-trained ministry. In a concrete way he recommended that the candidates have "personal piety" as well as "a competent degree of mental vigour and culture."[3] He believed that the applicant for the ministry should previously have had his mind trained and invigorated by a thorough education in the schools of secular learning.

1. Ibid
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1877
3. Alexander, New Series, Scottish Congregational Magazine, Vol. 2, 1842

> "There is nothing, I confess, of which I have more dread than of a man meeting books like those of Renan of Strauss without being himself thoroughly furnished upon the question, meeting them in a way that perhaps exposes him to charges of ignorance and blundering, probably uttering positions which it is quite impossible successfully to defend, and so playing into the very hands of the enemy in the very attempt to defend the camp of Israel . . . For it is a curious fact that while on the one hand it is required now of a minister of the gospel to have more than an ordinary amount of scholastic knowledge, scholastic skill, and argumentative and literary power, there is, on the other hand, a greater demand for popular preaching, or energetic and animated discourses than there used to be."[1]

The influence and effect of Alexander as a preacher can best be seen from accounts in the press after his death. The New York Scotsman of 27th December 1884 published:

> "Another master in Israel has fallen! Ever since the demise of Dr. Wardlaw in Glasgow, just thirty-one years ago, when, by common consent that prophet's mantle fell upon the shoulders of William Lindsay Alexander, the Christians of Scotland, of every denomination acknowledged the successor's towering greatness. He was the compeer and friend of Chalmers and Guthrie of the Free Church, of Brown, of Croom and Finlayson of the United Presbyterian Church; also the associate of Sir David Brewster, Francis Jeffrey, Lyon Playfair, Alexander Keith Johnston, and a host of other Edinburgh celebrities. The first impression of hearing Dr. Alexander speak at a meeting in Queen Street Hall was that of a man of almost universal sympathy and gigantic intellect. Whilst revelling in dialectical discussion he would pick up flowers of imagery, presenting them to a delighted audience. One forgot that he was attachedto any particular denomination, and claimed this humble but great man as a kingly countryman."[2]

The Dundee Advertiser asserted:

> "During a period unusually long for a city clergyman, the Rev. Dr. W. L. Alexander sustained a brilliant reputation in the Scottish capital for pulpit eloquence,

1. Alexander, Congregational Union, June 1864
2. New York Scotsman, 27 December 1884

though he had there such distinguished contemporaries as Drs. Candlish, Guthrie, Caird, Lee, and Wallace. Within the constellation that then adorned Edinburgh he was a 'burning and shining light' - his individual radiance unquenched and undimmed by the general effulgence. Neither his oratory nor his fame was marked by fitfulness or irregularity. None of his local contemporaries excelled, few indeed equalled, him, for the steadiness and uniformity of his influence, for in his middle life and in his advanced years he showed the full and glowing orb of his youth undiminished and undarkened. Some of his contemporaries might be more gorgeous and others more intense in their illuminating functions, but none of them dispensed his invariably clear and calm light. He arose in Edinburgh before the dawn of either Candlish or Guthrie; his splendour did not pale under the sudden bursting forth of their magnificence; that remarkable pair held on their dazzling and extended course without in the least obscuring him; and in 1873, when Guthrie was in the tomb and Candlish had become the mere shadow of his former self, Dr. Alexander's eloquence was unabated in brilliancy, freshness, and power, and men of all religious denominations delighted to be under its fascination."1

Finally, we shall give the report of the Scottish Correspondent of the Nonconformist and Independent:

"He (Alexander) was the very last of the men who are above all denominational environment, and was regarded as belonging to the Scottish Church Universal. Chalmers, Guthrie, Dean Ramsay, Norman Macleod, each had his own sect, but all the sects felt somehow related to them. It was the same with Dr. Alexander. He was well known to be a Congregationalist, but I question whether he was not held in as great esteem in, for example, the Free Church, to which on various occasions he rendered special service, as in his own communion. For another thing, I do not know that the religious world outside Edinburgh realises what a preacher has passed away. It was my hap, when a student, frequently to hear him, and I do not hesitate to say that in some respects he far outshone all his contemporaries in the city. There was a freshness, a point, and an originality in his expositions of the Scripture which made them remain for ever in the memory; and to this day there are passages

1. Dundee Advertiser, December 1884

in the Bible which I can never read without thinking at once of Dr. Lindsay Alexander."[1]

In the later years of his active ministry, Alexander more and more acted as a bishop in a denomination which has none; until at last no young minister was ordained but desired to have "the Doctor" at his side, and many a weary journey old Alexander took to all parts of the country to be present with the young man on his important day.

1. Scottish Congregational Magazine, February 1885

CHAPTER IV

CHURCHMAN

A. Congregationalism

From his university days at St. Andrews Alexander became active in the Congregational Churches. Later during the first years of his pastorate in Edinburgh he was a leader of the Churches and a well-known spokesman at the annual meeting of the Congregational Union of Scotland. He was constantly preaching and lecturing to his people on the doctrine of the Church and what it meant to Congregationalists.

Alexander comments in the Scottish Congregational Magazine on What is a Church:

> "The body of Congregationalists have been supposed to hold distinctly different views on this subject from those held by other bodies in this country. But such is not the case. They are in substantial agreement with the views of the two Established Churches of England and Scotland, as expressed on their standards. The Nineteenth Article of the Church of England says, 'The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful and believing men, in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.' This, and the expression of the same truth contained in the standards of the Established Church of Scotland, Congregationalists cordially accept. So far as the principle goes, they do

> not differ from these bodies, though, in so far as there is a departure from this principle in practice they have been obliged to dissent from them."[1]

In reference to the word "Church" he remarked that it is not in any sense a proper rendering of the Greek word "Ecclesia" which signifies "congregation" - though the translators of the English Bible were, to use their own words, "commanded" to use it for Ecclesia by King James and the Bishops to whom the word "congregation" did not commend itself. Alexander expressed his satisfaction that they were coming back to the use of the word "Congregational" as applied to their body in place of the term "Independent". He hoped that they would drop the habit of calling their Societies "Churches" and return to the former designation of "Congregations", because without this the term "congregational" is a misnomer. Either call our Societies "Congregations" or ourselves "Churchists". In stating it negatively, Alexander said that

> "the church is not merely an institution for the comfort, enjoyment, repose, refreshment, and edification of those who are its members, but that it is the design of the great Head of the Church that his Church should be an instrument for work in the world. It is not a mere form, a mere shadow, not a mere place of quiet retreat from the world; it is as a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. Every member of that Church, as soon as

1. Alexander, What is a Church, Scottish Congregational Magazine, October 1867, p. 338

> he is really brought into it, under the spiritual power of the truth, feels this rising in his bosom as a great question - 'Lord what wilt thou have me to do?' There may be seasons of langour and depression, when the church forgets its work, when coldness and torpidity creep over it, but these are only accidents incident to an institution left to be administered by frail and fallen men, the essential characteristic of the Church remains as an institution for work - as a great organization inspired by the spirit of Christ, which he has placed in this world, and on which he has laid the command - to convert the world to himself, that He may take his great power and reign, may be acknowledged from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."[1]

Alexander did not affirm that one church may not seek advice from another; nor that a member of one church may not cause discipline to be exercised against a member of another church who has been guilty of sin, by accusing him to the church of which he is a member; nor that one church may not pronounce judgment upon the conduct of another which has acted unscripturally; all this, it is conceived, may be done and yet the principle of Congregationalism be preserved entirely.

> "That principle, however, forbids the interference of authority on the part of one church with another, or the reference of a difference between parties in a church to the authoritative decision of a court appointed to try such cases, and composed of persons who are not members of that church.
>
> In the management of the affairs of the church, every member has an equal and independent right to follow the

1. Alexander, What the Church Is, Congregational Union, June, 1865, p. 169

> course which a regard to the authority of Scripture seems to him to prescribe. There is, of course, in all such cases need for the exercise of the Christian graces of humility, diffidence, candour, meekness, and charity,.."[1]

The duties of the members Alexander says are:

> "1) to take charge of the admission of applicants into their body; 2) to watch over each other in the exercise of brotherly love, bearing each other's burdens, rendering help to each other according to need, and seeking by all means to further each other's spiritual welfare; 3) to uphold the order and rule which Christ the Lord has appointed to be observed in his churches; choosing for office in the society such persons as seem best fitted to discharge the functions of office, sustaining and encouraging them in the legitimate and faithful discharge of their duty, and giving the sanction of their solemn concurrence in all acts of discipline which may be needful for the honour of the church, or the benefit of any of its members, and which are in accordance with the law of Christ, as laid down in the New Testament; and 4) to combine their energies and resources for the efficient carrying on of the work of the church, both as respects its own edification, and the evangelizing of those who are without."[2]

In Alexander's view the office bearers in a Christian Church are the pastor, or bishop, and the deacon. The functions of the minister are purely spiritual, consisting of teaching the brethren out of the Bible, and preaching the gospel to all whom he can reach. By his teaching he is to rule in the church, not over it, or apart from it; directing the brethren out of the written word how they ought to walk and by what courses they are best to discharge their eccle-

1. Alexander, Letter to the Churches, Scottish Congregational Magazine, August 1837
2. Alexander, Yearbook for the Congregation of Augustine Church, 1863, p. 5

siastical functions; not doing their duty for them, but instructing out of the infallible record how it should be done and seeing that they do it.

> "We know nothing of rulers in Christ's Church, who do not teach; and we protest against lay-leadership, as unauthorised by Scripture, and as subjecting the body of Christ to a government, which, not being vested in the hands of spiritual officers is anomalous and incongruous."[1]

The position of the minister is as an officer in the church and not as a lord over it. In judicial matters his position is analogous to a judge. The Congregational Churches being the Congregational Churches of Scotland can never be formed into one ecclesiastical body. According to the New Testament the term church refers to single and separate congregations.[2]

Alexander lays much importance upon the cooperation of the minister with his congregation.

> "True genuine Congregationalism depends on the pastor doing his duty, and the people theirs; not on the people devolving upon the shoulders of the pastor what Christ has laid on their own. Congregationalism will never thrive, if it be unnaturally grafted upon the stock of Officialism."[3]

As to the deacons, Alexander says that as referred to by Paul, they were evidently spiritual officers, along with

1. Ibid, p. 6
2. Alexander, Letter to the Churches, Scottish Congregational Magazine, August 1837, p. 230
3. Alexander, Pastoral Visitation, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1846, p. 599

the pastor, conducting the spiritual affairs of the society. He remarks that:

> "My own impression is that they were generally younger men looking forward to the pastorate; and that their advancement to that dignity depended on their efficient discharge of the functions of the inferior office . . . What seems to me very clear, however, is that the deaconship is a spiritual office, at least supremely so. There must, no doubt, be persons appointed to manage the temporal affairs of the Church; but of these the New Testament takes no note; there are not church officers in the proper sense of the term."[1]

Speaking on "Congregationalism" in an address of 1840 Alexander said that the views which are held among Congregationalists in relation to church order are divisible into two classes: those which belong to us as Independents and those which belong to us as Congregationalists.

> "As Independents we affirm that each church stands free of all extrinsic interference, whether proceeding from private individuals, ecclesiastical functionaries, or synodical bodies. As Congregationalists we assert the right and duty of every member of a church to take an interest in all matters relating to the management of the church's affairs. By the former we denounce all intrusion into the church from without; by the latter we protest against all encroachments upon the privileges of the body from within."[2]

Alexander through his articles and letters in the Congregational Magazine as well as his addresses at the meetings of the Congregational Union, soon came to be regarded by his friends as a leading champion of their cause.

1. Alexander, Yearbook of the Congregation of Augustine Church, 1863, p. 8
2. Alexander, Address on "Congregationalism", October 18, 1840, p. 4

Speaking of church polity he said in a sermon on The Distinctive Principles of Congregationalism, that the principles of church polity which distinguish them as Congregational Independents are few and simple. In fact, it is one of the evils which Congregationalists are disposed to lament in other religious bodies in Britain. Congregational fundamental principles are three, each of which may be signified by a single word: Purity, Liberty, Cooperation.

> "By purity we mean, that as a Christian Church is essentially and avowedly a society of Christians, we are bound to take our definition of that term from the New Testament, and to do our endeavour to make our Church association correspond to its true scriptural idea by receiving into our fellowship only such as profess to be Christians according to the New Testament definition and support that profession by credible evidence."[1]

Congregationalists require that those who wish to sit down with them at the table of the Lord and share with them in the privileges of Christ's house[2] should profess something more than merely a desire to be saved, a willingness to find peace in Christ, an anxiety to believe and be reconciled to God.

> "From the teaching of the New Testament we gather that the primitive churches were composed of those who had been saved - who were to be viewed not merely as hopeful and well-inclined persons, but in the judgment of charity as saints, partakers of the heavenly calling; and we conceive we are sacredly bound to erect our church fabric on the same basis and to admit to our

1. Alexander, The Distinctive Principles of Congregational Independency, p. 372, Scottish Congregational Magazine 1861
2. Ibid

> fellowship on the same profession. It is therefore with us a fundamental principle that none shall be recognized by us as true members of Christ's church excepting such as give credible evidence of their conversion to God through faith in Christ."1

By liberty Alexander means that each church is complete within itself, and therefore is able to manage its own affairs without being subject to any superior authority either civil or ecclesiastical. In other words, each church is autonomous and from it there is no appeal.

> "We are opposed alike to Erastianism, to prelacy, and to presbytery in this respect; we assert the completeness of each regularly formed society of believers; and we claim for each liberty to act in obedience to Christ's law without being amenable to any higher court."2

By cooperation Alexander implies that the business of Congregational churches is to be conducted by the common harmonious agency of the associated brethren as such. He says that not only do we hold that the people should freely elect their own office-bearers, and that these office-bearers are responsible to the society for their conduct in office, but that in church matters, business is to be transacted in the presence and with the concurrence of the members, and further that it is the duty of each member to use whatever talents God may have entrusted to him for the advancement of the Church's work, and on all the members to cooperate to promote the Church's welfare.

1. Ibid, p. 372
2. Ibid, p. 373

> "Hence, our action is congregational rather than official; not that we presume to set aside Christ's institute to render the offices he has appointed of none effect; but that we regard the end of such offices to be that of guiding the Church in its combined action, and so ruling in the Church as that its decisions shall be according to the mind of Christ, not ruling over it so as to subject God's heritage to man's control, or acting instead of it so as to supersede its agency, and render it inert and inoperative... We have shown in various ways that we recognize denominational unity and cooperation, that we can combine catholicity with liberty, and that our Independency while it precludes a mere carnal and outward confederacy promotes the true inner spiritual unity which is the only unity really desirable for the welfare of the Church - and, whereas, so far from rendering us bigoted and exclusive, our freedom is chiefly valued for us because it leaves every church at liberty to hold fellowship with any of Christ's followers without regard to denominational ties..."[1]

Alexander toured the continent of Europe on several occasions and during the summer of 1845 he studied the Swiss Independent Churches and found many principles in common with the Scottish Congergationalists.

1. Congregationalism in Switzerland

In 1846 Alexander published his book, Switzerland and the Swiss Churches, a major portion of which gives an account of church history in that country. Much similarity is revealed between the Swiss Independents and the Scottish Congregationalists, especially in the fundamental principles of Congregationalism. In writing about the Reformation days

1. Ibid, p. 374-375

in Switzerland an interesting fact is told about a Frenchman, Morelli by name, an Independent who resided in Geneva during the 1560s. In one of his books, Traite de la Discipline et Police de l'Eglise Chretienne, he writes:

> "Ecclesiastical elections ought to be conducted by all the people assembled together, each giving his voice, in place of (as is the case where churches and consistories are already arranged) the election being conducted apart, after an examination as to doctrine and manners, by the ministers and elders, or else at the colloquies; which election, after being notified to the people, the latter are free either to confirm it or to debate it before the Consistory, or if need be, to carry it still further, viz., to the Provincial or National Synod, so as to avoid intrigues and all confusion."[1]

Morelli also tells about the duties of the minister and his relation to the people.

> "Others besides ministers must act in the church, that it may be known that the church, in respect of the polity and discipline which Jesus Christ has ordained, and of the government which he has given in it to men, is not like a monarchy or any temporal lordship, in which certain princes have all full power; but is a holy and free community which, on this account, is called the communion of saints, and to which, and not to any individual, has Christ given all the power and the authority to be used for edification and not for destruction."

Before any are cut off from communion,

> "judgment must precede condemnation, and this judgment must be that of the church, following its own rule and discipline, and not that of the ministers alone."[2]

1. William L. Alexander, Siwtzerland and the Swiss Churches, p. 321
2. Ibid, p. 322-323

Morelli would not retract his statements, which he held were scriptural, even though the ministers handed him over to the consistory in Geneva. But he escaped and probably went to France, then returned to Geneva in 1563. The ministers called a meeting among whom were Calvin, Farel and Viret to ask Morelli why he had not appeared before the Consistory. A consistory was again called and the libel which was submitted to it against Morelli contained the following summary:

> "He pretends that the people has judgment in all that pertains to the government and polity of the church, and that if there are Consistories, they can finally determine nothing either as to doctrine or manners, but can only report to the people to whom alone it belongs."[1]

This doctrine shows that Morelli's views which the Council said were unscriptural and pernicious were almost identical with those of the Congregationalists. The council gave him no time to defend his views. They dared not let their ecclesiastical system be called erroneous and unscriptural. They laid the case of Morelli before the civil magistrates of Geneva. Again he escaped, this time to Lyons. The magistrates met and proceeded to judgment. They outlawed Morelli and his book was denounced as heretical and dangerous.

1. Ibid, p. 326

2. In Defence of Congregationalism

One notable case in which Alexander had to defend Congregationalism was the Cuthbert Case. In 1841 his vindication was carried outside the Magazine and the Union in a pamphlet which he published. In it he endeavoured to refute certain charges which had been made against the Congregational Union by the Rev. Mr. Cuthbert, a Congregational minister in Airdrie, and by the editor of the Secession Magazine. In brief, the Cuthbert case was this: The church at Airdrie desired that their minister, Mr. Cuthbert, demit his office. They contended that the cause of God among them was suffering injury at his hands, and that the church was not prospering under his care. Mr. Cuthbert claimed that this charge by the congregation was not sufficient to justify them in dismissing him as their minister. Alexander declared that some of the charges made by Cuthbert against his church were false and that the six ministers of the churches in Glasgow, Cambusland and Hamilton were called in not to act as judges but only as advisors.[1] Cuthbert was the first pastor of the church at Airdrie and since there was only one member in favour of retaining him, Alexander wondered if there might not be something wrong with Cuthbert's spirit and personality.

1. Alexander, Pamphlet, Refutation, 1841, p. 7

The second charge from Cuthbert was against the twelve lay members of the six churches which inquired into the state of things in the church at Airdrie. He objected to the churches in the West appointing delegates to inquire into his case maintaining that by so doing they violated the principles of independency of an individual church.

Using the New Testament as a guide, Alexander affirmed that a church is a society of Christians united together under proper office-bearers for mutual edification and extension of Christ's reign. Each of these societies is competent to conduct its own affairs without being amenable to the supervision of any external authority and consequently for any church to assume a right of dictation in regard to these affairs is to encroach upon their rights as a church.

> "Thus far our Independency of each other goes and no farther. We never pretended to regard each church as a mere isolated body, and independent of the good will and Christian affection of the members of other churches. On the contrary, we recognise each other as sister churches, and hold fellowship with each other as composed of similar materials, and associated for the same great ends."[1]

Furthermore, he adds:

> "as the principle of our fellowship as individuals in a church, is the mutual confidence of the members in each other, we have no desire to establish any other as the principle of our fellowship as churches. Better that we should incur the risk of occasional differences and disunions, than that we should attempt to force

1. Ibid, p. 23

> uniformity by measure which the New Testament does not sanction, and which are foreign from the spirit and genius of that kingdom which 'is not of this world'. Let our churches individually only keep their fellowship pure, and I have no fear of the permanency of our union as separate societies."[1]

The only ground on which Alexander can see that Mr. Cuthbert rests his charge against the Western churches is that they proceeded to investigate without Cuthbert's consent. Alexander compared this incident and action of the churches to the account in Acts XV.[2]

Cuthbert's third charge was that the churches were placed under the uncontrolled sway of the Acting Committee of the Congregational Union. Alexander demonstrates how wrong he was in this accusation. Cuthbert claimed that the Committee of the Union was self-elected. This was not true at all. He maintained also that all the Independent churches in Scotland were under the irresponsible control of a few individuals in Edinburgh who happened to compose the Acting Committee of the Congregational Union.

Alexander compared the action of the churches in the Cuthbert Case with what might have happened had a similar

1. Ibid, p. 24
2. In brief, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to inquire about the question: Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Peter rose up among the brethren and said: "We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus". Alexander's contention is irrelevant.

situation arisen in the Presbyterian Church. In that case the congregations would have had no voice in the outcome but ministers and elders would have made up the official body (ecclesiastical court) who would have pronounced, "I appoint and ordain".

> "One advantage, however, I trust our churches will reap through Mr. Cuthbert, in the lesson which his case will teach them, is not to be too easy in restoring their confidence to one, who, as a pastor, has justly forfeited it by official misconduct. We have now before us one glaring instance, at least, that the most humiliating confessions of sin, the most solemn protestations of amendment, and the most earnest entreaties for forgiveness form no infallible evidence of genuine repentance. . ."[1]

B. Church and State

1. The Voluntary Controversy

Early in Alexander's career a controversy took place on the merits and demerits of the Established Church. It was known as the Voluntary Controversy. Hugh Watt in his book Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption comments:

> "Through a sermon by a younger minister of the United Secession in 1829 was launched one of the most voluminous theological debates in modern history over the merits and defects, the justice or the iniquity, of an Established Church as such. Moderates and Evangelicals alike rallied to the defence of the National Church; the acrimonious Voluntary Controversy had begun".[2]

It was, then, among the Presbyterian Dissenters that

1. Ibid, p. 45
2. Watt, Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption, p. 10

the Voluntary Church controversy had its origin. The Seceders under Erskine held no principles which led them to oppose establishment of the church by civil magistrates; but a hundred years later a few had the convictions. In 1829 a sermon preached before the Glasgow Association for propagating the Gospel in connection with the United Secession Church, by the Rev. Andrew Marshall, minister of the United Secession Church in Kirkintilloch, urged against civil establishment of Christianity. The sermon was published and this was the firing of the first gun, so to speak, in the contest.[1] Several months later a review of it appeared in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor (August 1829) taking issue with Marshall. He replied with Ecclesiastical Establishments Further Considered. The argument was on and consequently Voluntary Church Associations arose in 1832 in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

A publication exclusively devoted to the advocacy of Voluntaryism was started bearing the name of The Voluntary Church Magazine. The upholders of the National Establishment felt constrained to set on foot a counter movement. In 1833 an Association in defence of the Church of Scotland was formed in Glasgow, and a periodical was launched which, in opposition to the Voluntary organ, was called the Church

1. Alexander, Memoirs and Letters of Ralph Wardlaw, p. 315

of Scotland Magazine.[1]

Personal piety was strong among Voluntarists, who held religion to be an individual matter, protesting that those who wished to have a church and a minister should be prepared to pay for them. Principles derived from the French Revolution fortified the belief in the individual and his rights and responsibilities.[2] The Reform Act of 1832 was an indication of this same democratic tendency of the times. Very similar views in regard to religious freedom appeared at this period in other countries such as Switzerland, France and Holland.

Alexander expressed his views on Voluntaryism in a lecture given in 1835 during the height of the Controversy. In the Case for Voluntary Churches he showed from Scripture those passages "which go to support and enforce that form of church polity of which we, as Dissenters, are the advocates."[3] The passages of Scripture which he gives as pertinent to the case are Psalm 110: 2, 3; Isaiah 2: 2, 3; II Corinthians 5: 20; I Corinthians 5: 11, 13; II Corinthians 6: 14, 15. These he asserts prove that entrance into the Christian Church is a matter purely voluntary on the part of each individual. Alexander further claims that it is competent for every Christian church to refuse admission to those

1. C. G. McCrie, The Church of Scotland, p. 171
2. G. D. Henderson, The Church of Scotland, p. 126
3. Alexander, Lecture for the Voluntary Church, March 18, 1835, pp 24 to 28

applicants of whose qualifications the members of that church stand in doubt, and that none were to be recognised as members of the Church of Christ whose characters and conduct did not give evidence that they were truly pious and devout. With the Established Church the very opposite is true. They regard every man in the Kingdom as responsible to the church, and no man can be refused admission to the ordinances of the church whose character is clear in the eye of the civil law, however far he may be from possessing that character which every member of Christ's church is required by the Bible to possess.[1] He says:

> "Either all the institutions of the Bible are of perpetual obligation, or men must be permitted to take only what they choose, and leave what they dislike of its prescriptions. If we hold by the former part of this alternative, the objection before us falls to the ground; if by the latter, we admit a principle which would go to render truth a matter of taste, and to substitute a regard to our own convenience, as the law of our faith and practice, in the place of a reverential regard to the authority of God.
>
> It is a fact, which no person can deny, that the churches planted by the Apostles, and administered under their superintendence, were churches upon the Voluntary model; churches which had no connection with the various governments under which they flourished, and all the expenses of which were defrayed from private sources. . . Whether we turn to the prophetic descriptions of the kingdom of Christ in ancient times; or to the historical narrative of its rise and progress during our Saviour's life; or to the terms in which it is spoken of by the inspired penmen; or, in fine, to the express declaration respecting it by Christ

1. Ibid, pp 24 to 28

himself, we find this one truth invariably pressed upon our minds, that it is a spiritual kingdom, - a kingdom as holy and unworldly in its attributes as it is blessed and benignant in its ends.

In a civil Establishment of religion, the kingdom of Christ is interwoven with the kingdoms of this world; for such institutions, as everyone knows, are called into being by the civil authority, are maintained by the civil authority, and, in too many instances are governed by the civil magistrate. . but I do say, that the system, as such, is essentially worldly, and divested of all that is truly spiritual. What else can we say of a system which seeks to ally itself with the princes of earth, - to attach to itself the pomp and pageantry of temporal authority, - to define the limits of the visible church by the lines which politicians have drawn, - to make admission to its communion, a matter dependent not on spiritual attainment, but on mere social and civil respectability, - and, in fine, to look for its support, not to the members of the kingdom of Christ, but to the citizens of earthly states, whom it forces by compulsion to minister to its wants? What is all this, I ask, but to establish, in place of the Kingdom of Christ, a kingdom of this world."[1]

In the same year that Alexander entered the Controversy Dr. Chalmers in the publication of Church Extension[2] thought it proper to give the case of the church in North College Street, of which his former pupil had just become pastor, as one of the most impressive proofs which could be given for the utter inefficacy, either of a voluntary system which refuses the "parochial" economy,[2] or of an establishment which has abandoned it, to provide for the Christian education of the families. The 'proof' consisted of the

1. Chalmers, Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches, delivered in London April 25 to May 12, 1838
2. Ibid

allegation that within a stone's throw of the chapel in North College Street there were 226 individuals, of whom only nine were seat holders in any place of worship, and of these nine not one had rented a sitting among the Independents, and although one third of the sittings in their church were free, only one person in the locality attended the North College Street Chapel, and he only occasionally. An exposure of the fallacy of Dr. Chalmers' statistics was made in the Congregational Magazine by a member of the church, above the signature of "Philalethes". He showed that even within the district marked out by Dr. Chalmers there were seventy-one persons who attended the Established churches in the city, and ninety-two who attended dissenting churches, of whom seven were worshippers in North College Street Chapel.[1]

Alexander was one of the strong defenders of Dr. John Brown, who in 1838 refused on conscientious grounds to pay the Edinburgh Annuity Tax, which at that time was levied on ratepayers of the city for the support of the ministers and churches of the Church Establishment.[2] There had been a division among the Independents themselves on this matter and R. Haldane was the leader of those who opposed Brown.

In 1837 when Queen Victoria came to the throne, the Voluntary Controversy in Scotland had reached its climax.

1. Ross, W. Lindsay Alexander, p. 112
2. Ibid, p. 114

By this time a dispute had arisen between the two parties in the Established Church regarding the Moderatorship of the General Assembly. Dr. Chalmers wanted Dr. Gardner of Bothwell, but a number of others desired Dr. Lee of Edinburgh, a moderate. Dr. Chalmers fiercely assailed his opponents both in his pamphlets and in the church courts. Alexander, writing in the Congregational Magazine expressed his views of Dr. Chalmers' attitude:

> "Though in the judgment of charity we absolve Dr. Chalmers from any intentional dishonesty, it is impossible to read these publications without being convinced that his position in the eye of the public must be immeasurably lowered by the outbreak of spleen and ill-nature of which he has in this case been guilty. The contrast between the style of cool and haughty insolence in which he lectures his co-presbyters, and the tone of humble apology in which alone he can now address them, would be inexpressibly ridiculous were he other than Dr. Chalmers. But his is a splendid and venerable name, and the glory with which it is covered casts a protecting halo around even the follies of its possessor. He has in his declining years been imposed upon by flattering tongues, and made a tool of by persons who will be the first to desert him when they see the errors into which he has plunged. In such a case the language of ridicule must give way to that of heartfelt regret."[1]

Alexander was a Voluntarist but he never went the length of denunciation of State-Church Establishments as did some of his friends. His objection to state churches was a practical one - that they were serious hindrances to the Christian love and cooperation which he desired to see

1. Ibid, p. 115

fostered among churches of all denominations. He was wise enough to say that while he agreed with his dissenting brethren in regarding state churches as, in a certain sense (to use words often employed at the time) "sinful contrivances", it was in the same sense in which he regarded Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, and Methodism as sinful contrivances, not certainly as sinful in themselves, far less as implying moral trupitude on the part of those who support them, but simply as contrivances not sanctioned by the word of God, and consequently as tending to evil rather than good in the church.[1]

One of the strictest Voluntaryists was Dr. Wardlaw of the West George Street Congregational Church in Glasgow. He delivered eight lectures called National Church Establishments Examined[2] which were an answer to the London lectures of Dr. Chalmers. Wardlaw closed his summary of the evil effects of the establishment principle by a direct attack on his Scottish Establishment opponents. He reminded them of the Convenanters who resisted unto death allegiance to the royal will. They were the martyr heroes of the Scottish Church and yet they were resisting

1. Alexander, The Distinctive Principles of Congregational Independency, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1861
2. Wardlaw's lectures were delivered at the Freemasons Hall, London, April and May, 1831

the very principle which their admirers now supported.[1]

Wardlaw, like Alexander, entered the lists in the Voluntary Controversy with a firm conviction that the correct system of Church government and the authoritative illustration of the proper relationship between Church and state were both to be found in the New Testament.

> "I. That in the New Testament there is no recognition whatever of the power of civil rulers in matters of religion.
> II. That in the New Testament the maintenance and progress of the Church's interests are, with all clearness and explicitness, authoritatively committed to the Church itself.
> III. That all imitation of the ancient Jewish Constitution in this particular, is from its very nature, impossible; and, were it possible, would not be warrantable."[2]

Wardlaw maintained that what Chalmers called external Voluntaryism is really not Voluntaryism at all, there being in the description of it an entire overlooking of the essential difference between the spontaneous liberality of private individuals and the conferring by the State on a particular church of what is public property. His idea of Voluntaryism was extreme; he urged complete separation of church and state.

> "Wardlaw really meant that as a man the ruler is bound to believe the truths and obey the precepts of God's word, while as a magistrate he is under

1. Wardlaw, National Church Establishments Examined, p. 373
2. Ibid, p. 73

> obligation to fulfil all his official functions on Christian principles, from Christian motives, and according to Christian motives. Even with this qualification the Voluntaryism of the Glasgow champion (Wardlaw) was of an extreme type and as such it has been repudiated by that thoroughgoing Voluntary, his biographer, the acute and erudite Dr. W. L. Alexander."1

In a letter to Dr. Chalmers and the Rev. Thomas Guthrie on the question of cooperation with Dissenters, Peter Waddell wrote:

> "In selecting Mr. Alexander as a fellow labourer in the Gospel, you must consider him either as the representative of Independency, or as an individual evangelist. Now, suppose we regard him as the representative of a denomination, then I repeat on the one hand what I have intimated already, that we may very easily cooperate with Independents as Voluntaries, to a certain extent; for the very characteristic of their dissent is liberty. We may cooperate with them as Voluntaries, although we do not acknowledge the validity of Congregational polity."2

Early in 1842 Chalmers supported a proposal to abolish patronage and by the act remove the grounds of strife persisting for nearly ten years. By a large majority the General Assembly denounced patronage as the main cause of difficulties in which the church was involved, and approved a statement of its position entitled, A Claim, Declaration, and Protest, commonly known as the Claim of Right. It

1. C. G. McCrie, The Church of Scotland, p. 168
2. Peter H. Waddell, A Letter to Thomas Chalmers and the Rev. Thomas Guthrie on the Question of Cooperation with Dissenters with special reference to the Case of Rev. W. L. Alexander, p. 10

asserted that the rights and liberties of the Church had of late been assailed to an extent that threatened its complete subversion, concluded that its government could not be carried on subject to the coercion exercised by the Court of Session, and protested that Acts passed without the Church's consent and prejudicial to its government as recognised at the Union, were other than in their civil consequences, null and void.[1]

To ease the tensions between the Established Church and the Dissenters, Alexander was an advocate of the exchange of pulpits between the two groups. However, in this matter he was opposed by many of his Dissenting colleagues. In 1842 there appeared an advertisement in several of the Edinburgh newspapers signed by the Chairman of the Scottish Central Board of Dissenters which professed to contain the sentiments of a large majority of that body, the design of which was to denounce ministerial intercourse, in the way of occasional exchange of pulpit services between Churchmen and Dissenters. Alexander replied to this in a sermon on 7th August 1842, the Sunday after the advertisement appeared in the newspapers, declaring that the

> "issuing of such a document appeared to me so utterly uncalled for at the present moment, and so much calculated to do injury to the character of the Dissenters

1. Terry, A History of Scotland, p. 622

> in the estimation of the pious and well-disposed members of the Established Church whilst the sentiments it contained are so repugnant to some of my most cherished principles, that I felt constrained to adopt some very public mode of uttering my protest against it."[1]

In the preface of the published discourse on The Unity of the Christian Church and the Communion of Christians, Alexander writes that the advertisement in the newspapers was an uncalled-for and unprovoked document and in truth would do much harm to the character of the Dissenters in the estimation of the Established Church members. He was furious with the authors of the advertisement, for he felt there was no pressure from the Established Church to provoke such a sentiment, though if there had been pressure, the Central Board would have been justified in issuing such a statement. He maintained that there had been no particular rush of Dissenting ministers to occupy the pulpits of their Established Church colleagues. There were not any prospects that such would occur, and so again there was no reason for the Central Board's admonitory advertisement. The board repudiated something which had not been offered and made the Dissenters look like bigoted, contentious and quarrelsome folk who not only retaliated when assailed but made the very possibility of opponents seeking their friendship the occasion for again giving vent to the Dissenters' superabundant spleen.[2]

1. Alexander, Unity of the Christian Church, August, 1842
2. Ibid, Preface

Alexander had been condemning the Established Church as being unchristian because they would not let Dissenters preach in their churches. Now that that barrier had been repealed he certainly would not be so hypocritical as to say there should be no interchange of ministers. Having taken a stand for Christian unity, he found it inconsistent to repudiate any act of kindness shown to Dissenters by the Established Church.[1]

The Central Board of the Dissenters were sceptical of the motives behind the new friendliness of the Established Church. They claimed (probably falsely) that

> "the overtures are not friendly; they are made insincerely for sinister ends. They cannot be accepted by Dissenters without a compromise of those principles of opposition fo Civil Establishments of religion which they have of late so warmly advocated."[2]

Such are the reasons which had influenced not a few to concur in the movement of the Central Board in this matter. Alexander saw no insincerity on the part of the Established Church who repealed the act of 1799.[3] He saw only an Act

1. Ibid
2. Ibid
3. The Act of the General Assembly of 1799 declared 1) None but licentiates of the Church of Scotland were capable of receiving a presentation to any parish within its bounds, 2) The act also prohibited the ministers of the Church from employing any to preach in their pulpits besides the authorised licentiates and ministers of the Church, or from holding ministerial communion with any such persons.

of the Assembly yielding ground which the Assembly thought unchristian. From the principle to which they had returned, he saw them extending a hand of fellowship to Christians in denominations other than their own and he accepted in good faith the hand of comradeship.

Alexander wondered if the Dissenters were so ill-informed that they could not discern between a compromise of principle on the part of their ministers, and a friendly cooperation between ministers of different parties without a compromise.

> "Are the people so careless about what Dissenters teach, or so little impressed by it that any little inconsistency will seduce them from the Dissenters? No one could seriously anticipate such results. Why, then, should the Central Board dread the interchange of pulpits between ministers of the Establishment and Dissenting ministers and feel it would be a detriment to the latter?"[1]

Still other Dissenters had put the matter in another way: - The leaders of the Non-Intrusionist party were anxious to get it believed that Dissenters were on their side, and when Dissenters preached for the Established Church, their end would be gained; the end being that Legislature would see how well the two got on. "Bugbear!" cried Alexander.

> "It's nonsense to suppose that because the Established Church and Dissenters exchange pulpits the latter would forget all they have been fighting for, all they

1. Alexander, Unity of the Christian Church, August, 1842

have petitioned Parliament for, or that the obdurate heart of Sir Robert Peel, which no other arguments could soften, melts before this and a bill is straightway introduced in Parliament giving to the Non-Intrusionists all that they want!

This brings me back to a former question: How far am I to go in the way of holding Christian Communion with those from whom I differ in sentiment on minor points? Until the question is solved I must either continue to hold fellowship with all Christians or I must withdraw within the circle of my own communion and hold fellowship with its members alone.

I have taken my part cheerfully in the Voluntary Controversy, according to my humble ability, as occasion required. But with me the Voluntary Controversy had no charms, save as a means to certain ends; one of the chief of which was, the removal of those great obstacles to Christian love, which the existence of a civil establishment of religion creates. Having thus taken my stand as an advocate for Christian unity, I should regard it as a swerving from my true position, if I met with coldness or hostility any honourable overtures of friendship, even from those whose system I have thus condemned. If they, through the influence of Christian feeling, have become better than their principles, is that any reason why I should become worse than mine?"[1]

Alexander had expressed his dissenting principles very sharply while still a lay preacher in Liverpool when he wrote a paper in 1834 entitled An Examination of the Reasons For Attachment to the Church of England, Adduced by the Rev. William Dalton, A. M. in His Lecture Recently Published. In it he calls Dalton to task for a number of statements he made in regard to dissenting churches. The Church of England was building many churches in London, Dalton

1. Ibid

stated, and Alexander pointed out that there were 194 established churches and 265 dissenting chapels. Alexander criticised Dalton's reference, Dwight's Travels, 4th volume, as being thirty-four years old and out of date in discussing religion in North America. Alexander said that more progress was made in religion in ten years after New York State abolished a state church than had been made in the previous twenty-five years. New York had a state church from 1693 to 1776. Alexander next pulls Dalton's defence of diocesan episcopacy apart point for point quite convincingly. In regard to Dalton's favourable argument for episcopacy he referred to the Church of Scotland. For that poor judgment Dalton deservingly got corrected: "the Moderator of the General Assembly has no dignity other than to lead discussions of his brothers."[1] Alexander then discusses liturgy and articles or creeds. The objections of dissenters to civil establishments of religion are: such institutions are unjust and detrimental to the best interests of the Christian churches; they are unjust because they compel men to pay for what they do not use; they raise one group over the heads of others and inflict persecution for conscience's sake; they are unscriptural because they not only have no scripture for

1. Alexander, An Examination of the Reasons for Attachment to the Church of England, 1834, pp. 33 to 37

them but are even opposed to many declarations of the word of God; they are impolitic for they produce civil discord; and they are also injurious to the interests of religion. Alexander strongly advocates his Independent principles when he says:

> "such a settlement can be achieved only by the triumph of dissenting principles, and the utter abolition of every vestige of a civil establishment of religion in these realms. Till this event be consummated, Dissenters can never be silent; the sooner it arrives the better for the cause of truth and concord, of quiet government and diffusive piety."[1]

2. The Tractarian Controversy

In England during the 1830s there was a controversy between High Churchmen and the Evangelical group. It was comparable to and contemporary with the Voluntary Controversy in Scotland between the Established Church and the Independents. The Tractarian Controversy had its origin in the Oxford Movement which was an influential enterprise in England associated with the names of Keble, Newman and Pusey. It began in 1833 as a declaration of spiritual independence directed against Erastianism and state interference. It permanently effected every part of English church life, involving a spiritual revival, a return to doctrine, a rebirth of ritual, and a development

1. Ibid, p. 38

into Anglo-Catholicism. The leaders of the Oxford Movement and Scottish Non-Intrusionism held essentially the same views of the nature of the church and of its relation to the state.[1] People who were alarmed at the tendencies revealed by the Oxford Movement naturally were suspicious of the high claims of the Scottish Evangelicals.

The whole of the Oxford Movement was, in effect, a passionate assertion that the church must rule or society cease to be Christian. It was an appeal to the fathers of the early church.

Anti-Erastian views of church polity were one of the most prominent features of the Tractarian movement. It was Richard Whately who first made young Newman conscious of the church as a divine and historic institution, and first roused in him a suspicion that the soul of man has no private right of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.[2]

The leaders of the controversy, Newman, Pusey and Keble, expressed their ideas in the Tracts for the Times, of which no less than twenty-seven were from the pen of Newman, including Tract 90 which deals with certain assertions in the Thirty-nine Articles. It was the strong convictions which Alexander had on the points at issue in the Tracts for the Times, and the alarm he felt in the danger

1. G. D. Henderson, The Church of Scotland, p. 139
2. G. Faber, Oxford Apostles, p. 105

to which evangelical religion was exposed, that led him to write his elaborate work, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical.

> "The great question at issue is simply this: Does Christianity depend upon the Church as a visible body, or does the Church depend upon Christianity? In other words, is it the Church-existing by the preserving care of God, endowed with mysterious and supernatural power over the destinies of men, and whose ever-vital nucleus is found in the clerical order, by the members of which her order is preserved, her unity manifested, and her power dispensed - Is it the Church thus constituted, which conveys salvation to men? Or do men, by obtaining salvation, each one for himself, by the reception of God's offer of mercy through Christ, constitute, by their spiritual union with Christ, the Church of God, which is holy catholic and invisible, and by their outward fellowship with each other such churches as Christ has appointed to exist visibly on the earth? This is the great question at issue, which must be justly apprehended, and fairly dealt with before this controversy can even approximate to a close."[1]

This volume by Alexander contains a great mass of judicious and valuable Biblical criticism and an able exposition of the leading principles of the Christian faith. The question Alexander asks, "Does Christianity depend upon the Church as a visible body, or does the Church depend upon Christianity?" was undoubtedly the grand question at issue between the Tractarians and the sincere advocates of Biblical Christianity. With a degree of patience and candour, Alexander in this polemical writing, has threaded his way through the whole of Tractarian

1. Alexander, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, Preface

theology and has shown it to be a maze of traditional fables and human devices supplanting alike the doctrines and the institutions of the New Testament.

In the second chapter of his book Alexander writes that another question is, "What is the test by which all religious opinions are to be estimated?"[1] He deals explicitly with three tests. The Rationalists and Romanists occupy two extremes. The former bring all things to the standard of human reason and the Romanists demanding unqualified submission to the church. Between these extremes is a middle party who receive the Bible as the inspired word of God, who regard it as containing all that is necessary to salvation and morals, and who bow to it as the only infallible standard of faith and practice. The Bible honestly interpreted by such light as God in His grace may give us, is the only standard to which we should consent to appeal - the only standard to which, believing in the inspiration of Scripture, we should feel ourselves at liberty to appeal. In short, Alexander will not allow any authoritative interpreter to come between the mind of man and his Bible.

1. Ibid, p. 25

Alexander next discusses the doctrine of the church.

> "If the church of Christ be identical with the reign of God or of heaven; concerning which it is said that 'it is with men'; that 'it is not of this world'; that 'it cometh not with observation'; that 'it is not meat or drink, but righteousness and joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost'; Luke 12: 20, 21; John 17: 36; Romans 14: 17 - what can be concluded concerning it, but that it is a purely spiritual association, the members of which are linked together by no other than spiritual bonds, than spiritual means? And if, again, the church of God be that which is 'built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, - if it be the place where the whole body of the redeemed, whether Jews or Gentile, meet together in a common fellowship, - if it be the abode of the family of God, of which it is said, that it is partly in heaven and partly on earth, (Eph. 3: 15) - if it be that in which God dwells by his spirit; how can it be a mere outward visible confederacy upon earth, comprising men collected together by mere outward means, and exhibiting all varieties of character, disposition and conduct? There is surely such a discrepancy here between the representations of Scripture and the doctrines of Catholicism, as should lead all who hold the latter, anew to examine their principles by the unerring standard of the divine word."[1]

Alexander then takes up the doctrine of Christ as Head of the Church.

> "To what is it or to whom, that Christ stands in this relation? Is it to this or that community of Christians confederated together on earth? If so, which of them is the true body? For as there is but one head, there cannot surely be many bodies. If it be replied that the Catholic Church is that body, I ask how can Christ be more a head to that body than to any other which owns his authority, obeys His law, and trusts to his grace? This is all that can be done by any body of Christians;

1. Ibid, p. 164

> and where this is done, there surely is a part, at least, of His body. It will not do to say that the Catholic Church is the only church which really obeys, fears, and trusts in Christ; for this would be quietly to assume the most important point at issue. Besides, even supposing this granted, it would still be competent for us to ask, does the visible Catholic Church on earth at any given time comprehend the whole of those ransomed sinners who form Christ's body, and to whom He is the author of grace and guidance?"[1]

Alexander affirms that such a position as the Anglo-Catholics claim seems to him not only unscriptural, but absurd. To sum it in a few words he says,

> "The headship of Christ over His universal church as a spiritual body, is a consistent, as well as a delightful conception; but to speak of Him as the head of a visible body, whether consisting of one congregation, or of many, seems to me an inaccuracy of thought and language which it would be desirable to avoid."[2]

A very important controversial issue between Tractarians and Evangelicals was that of the claims and functions of the ministry. Under this topic Alexander discusses apostolical succession. He writes concerning this:

> "What should we think of a man who should claim a dormant peerage on such pretences as those on which the Anglican clergy claim spiritual descent from the apostles, - whose genealogy, when it came to be examined, was found to contain the names of persons who apparently never existed, of persons of whom it was not known which was the father and which the son. . . 'I am fully satisfied', says Bishop Hoadly, 'that till a consummate stupidity can be happily established, and universally spread over

1. Ibid, p. 165
2. " p, 169

> the land, there is nothing that tends so much to destroy all respect to the clergy as the demand of more than can be due to them; and nothing has so effectually thrown contempt upon a regular succession of the ministry as the calling no succession regular but what was uninterrupted; and the making the eternal salvation of Christians to depend upon that uninterrupted succession, of which the most learned can have no notion but through ignorance and credulity?' Such is the opinion of apostolical succession, entertained by one of the very men who forms the chain by which it is pretended that this succession has come down from St. Peter to the metropolitans of the Anglican Church in the present day. . . On this the validity of their clerical orders rest; for, if they cannot trace these up to Christ as their source, in what respect do they, as ministers of Christ, differ from others who have the same title?"[1]

Alexander continues the analysis of the claims and functions of the Christian ministry by explaining ordination. He states that there is nothing in the New Testament which says a man must be ordained by a bishop. Nothing more is required than that the man be competent for the pastoral office. Timothy and Titus he quotes as saying that a man should have personal piety, unblemished reputation, holy zeal and aptness to teach. From the New Testament, Alexander affirms, we can infer that the people had freedom in choosing their own ministers. He maintains that not once does the word priest appear in the New Testament referring to the office or functions of a Christian pastor, and in no instance are

1. Ibid, p. 238

the duties of the office described by the most distant allusion to the temple service. He is satisfied that the high pretensions which the Catholic clergy advanced are without a proper basis,[1] and he falls back upon the simple institutions of the apostles regarding the pastoral office. As a result, he says,

> "A vague feeling of awe comes in the place of that intelligent respect with which the people should regard their minister; a slavish and demoralising dependence on the office of priest is substituted for enlightened and purifying submission to the lessons of the instructor; whilst the pastor himself sinks from the honourable place of the friend and counsellor of his flock, to that of a mere religious martinet, whose business it is to see that they go regularly through their appointed discipline, and whose grand aim is to maintain a dominion over their superstitious fears, which, after all, he must be content to share with the fortune-teller and the conjuror."[2]

In the remaining two chapters of his volume, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, Alexander examines the views of Dr. Pusey and Dr. Newman on Justification Unto Life and The Christian Life. The questions, How may we be saved from guilt? How may we serve God? What are our duties as individuals, as a relation, as a subject? are all answered by Alexander's scriptural interpretation of the Church. That is; man obtains salvation for himself by union with Christ which is holy, catholic

1. Ibid, p. 274
2. " p. 276

and invisible; and by his outward fellowship with one another. This is in strong contrast to the Tractarian interpretation of the Church - the Church endowed with mysterious and supernatural power over the destinies of men, with an ever-vital nucleus found in the clerical order.

The summary of his thesis is well-stated on the closing pages of the book.

> "The Tractarian's denial of the right of private judgment - its doctrine of an outward visible corporation, called the universal church, from which Christianity descends by means of clerical rites to the individuals who are ingrafted into it - its constituting of the clergy as such into a separate and superior order of Christians - its investing of them with mystic authority transmitted in direct line from Christ himself - its ascription to the sacraments as administered by them of an awful sanctity and mysterious saving virtue - and its allotment to the people a gloomy penitential path, as that through which alone they can pass to heaven, and all departures from which must be atoned for by such sacrifices as only the priest can offer: all tend to elevate the clergy to undue authority, to invest them with dangerous power, and to prostrate the community in grovelling superstition at their feet."[1]

From this trend of reasoning follows the destruction of real godliness among people. Religion to be effective must be real and to be real it must be personal; to be personal it must be based on the convictions of the person's own mind, or that religion which rests upon the offices of another such as "Obey the Church" or "Do as your

1. Alexander, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, pp. 404-405

priest commands you" - this sort of religion is, in the estimation both of reason and Scripture, utterly worthless.[1]

Alexander's main purpose in writing this book was to expose the pretentious claims of the Anglo-Catholic party in the Church of England. The volume actually contains the statements and defence of his views on church polity. As Ross suggested, by a slight rearrangement of the material the title of the book might be altered to Congregational Independency - The Church Polity of the New Testament.[2]

3. Disruption of the Established Church

In May 1843 the Disruption of the Established Church in Scotland took place. It resulted in the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. Alexander had taken a deep interest in the Ten Years' Conflict[3] which preceded the Disruption. Prior to it, many members of the Established Church were going to Congregational Churches to hear the evangelical preaching. When the Established Church had an evangelical revival in their preaching, the people who had attended the Congregational Churches returned to the Established Church.[4]

1. Ibid, p. 405
2. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 122
3. See supra, pp. 4-9
4. Ross, A History of Congregational Independency, p. 121

The Disruption was not only an ecclesiastical movement but a religious revival which had been going on for many years and it resulted in a large increase of evangelical preachers throughout Scotland. The Congregationalists became less distinctive among dissenters in their preaching.

On May 18, 1843 Dr. David Welsh, Professor of Church History at the University of Edinburgh, and Moderator of the preceding General Assembly, took the chair in St. Andrews' Church and read a protest signed by 203 commissioners to the Assembly. It was a summary of the Claim of 1842 - 1) Sole headship of Christ, and 2) The government of the church in the hands of office-bearers distinct from the Civil Magistrate. Dr. Welsh left the church followed by Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Gordon, Dr. Patrick Macfarlan, Dr. Thomas Brown, Dr. Guthrie and others.[1] Alexander was one of these men in their march from St. Andrews' Church on George St. to Tanfield Hall in Canonmills, a distance of about one half mile within Edinburgh, where the first Free Church Assembly met.[2]

There is no full record of Alexander's opinions and feelings regarding this great movement. However, the Free Church Party had his full sympathy and support in their opposition to the interference of the civil courts

1. McCrie, The Church of Scotland, p. 187
2. Ross, W. L. Alexander, p. 116

in ecclesiastical affairs as for example in the Cardross Case which we will discuss immediately.

Alexander was disappointed with the Free Church movement in two respects. The first was that the Free Church was interested in getting numbers into their movement and consequently it became more ecclesiastical than spiritual. Alexander thought that they had a fine opportunity of forming a new Presbyterian Church on spiritual principles and having a church membership based on personal piety. This was, of course, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, Alexander's interpretation of a Christian Church as based on the New Testament. He was disappointed to see that the Free Church was in reality no different from the Established Church.

The second disappointment came from the attitude the Free Church had adopted as a result of the success of their movement. They felt that they were the only Church and the true Church of Scotland. They acted as if little good had been done in Scotland until the Free Church came into existence. Despite Alexander's disappointment in the movement, he continued to cooperate with them in the defence of principles which they held in common. At the beginning of the Disruption the congregation of Argyle Square offered the use of their church for a period of six months to the Free Church members from the Brighton

Street district where Dr. Charles Brown was minister. At the close of this period he presented to Alexander's congregation two communion cups of silver in remembrance of the kindness he had received.

4. The Cardross Case

In 1859 the Cardross Case was before the Court of Session,[1] and the proceedings in connection with it furnished a fitting opportunity to Congregationalists and others not belonging to the Free Church to show their opposition to the interference of the civil courts in the affairs of churches not connected with the state.

Let us look briefly at the case as related by Alexander.[2] Mr. McMillan, late Free Church minister at Cardross, was charged with immorality and brought before the Presbytery of Dumbarton. He was adjudged guilty of one charge, partially of another and a third was found not proved. An appeal was made to the Synod where judgment of the Presbytery was disallowed. The Synod said that two charges were not proven and the third was discharged. The case came before the General Assembly of the Free Church in May 1858 where judgment of the Presbytery was sustained. McMillan appealed to the civil court. The civil court

1. Ross says the date was about 1861. History of Congregational Independency, p. 157
2. Alexander, The Cardross Case, Scottish Congregational Magazine, May 1860, p. 19

asked the church court "appointing the parties respectively to give in minutes setting forth the admissions they repectively made in regard to the writings referred to in the proceedings, and whether they do or do not renounce further probation."[1] The church court refused to give the information. Alexander affirms,

> "The question at issue, therefore, is neither more nor less than; Can a really free church be allowed in Scotland?"[2]

He elaborates on this question when he says,

> "The very existence of the church, as a spiritual body, is at stake on this issue. Concede such power to the civil courts and church discipline would be an empty name, toleration a delusive pretence, and the church itself a byword and a proverb among the nations. The free exercise of discipline is essential to the very idea of a church as a society under Christ. Given a church, it must be independent or it ceases to be a church in any true and spiritual sense. But if the church be an independent body by its very idea, does not the destruction of this independence virtually destroy the church? Can an institution survive the destruction of its fundamental idea? . . By the British constitution free toleration is granted to all churches."[3]

The question as to the right of the Court of Session to exercise the power it claimed was never settled, the appellant having withdrawn the case.

1. Ibid, p. 20
2. " p. 20
3. " p. 23

5. The Sites' Bill

A notable example of Voluntaryism gone mad is the case of the Sites' Bill in which Alexander exerts his love of the singular and fails to be consistent to his usual order of original and independent thinking. The Dissenters were vehement with Alexander for the position he took in this case. From the surface of the whole matter it appeared as if Alexander were opposing the aims of the Dissenters.

The Anti-Sites Resolutions of Alexander referred to the case of the Duke of Buccleuch. The duke was mentioned as one who refused his tenants a site on which to worship after they had broken away from the Established Church. Alexander published a manifesto in the name of a body called The Scottish Board for Protecting the Civil Rights of Congregational Dissenters, immediately before the second reading of the Sites' Bill. This action of Alexander's was the only one of its kind in the United Kingdom.[1] Could it have been because an agent of the Duke of Buccleuch was a member of Alexander's church? Alexander wrote in his Anti-Sites Resolutions:

> "1) That the Board, being decidedly opposed to the use of all compulsion in the service of the Church of Christ, and regarding the Sites for Chapels Bill of Mr. Bonverie as proceeding upon the principle that, in certain specified cases, the holders of land may be legally impelled to furnish sites for the erection of places of worship, are constrained to express their

1. Editorial, Free Church Magazine, p. 177, Volume V January to December, 1843

> disapprobation of said Bill on this ground; for whilst they admit the obvious difference between compulsion when used to effect the payment of money for service of the Church, they are, nevertheless, of the opinion, that in neither case is such compulsion compatible with the spiritual nature of the Church of Christ.
>
> 2) That whilst maintaining that every holder of land is morally bound in the sight of God, the great Proprietor of all, not to prevent any body of Christians from worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences, by refusing to sell them a portion of the soil on which to erect a building for that purpose and whilst deploring and condemning the conduct of those proprietors who have so acted in reference to any body of Christians as well as sincerely sympathizing with those who have recently been exposed to suffering on this account, the members of this Board, at the same time, think that this claim should be enforced by moral means alone; that it should continue to suffer (as the times past it has repeatedly suffered) inconvenience and injury from the refusal of sites for chapels, than be armed with authority to extort this right from an unwilling landlord by the strong hand of the civil power."[1]

Alexander took the position that this case was an extraordinary specimen of Voluntaryism run mad. But the Dissenters asked him to point out how this moral machine of his was to work in the way of securing sites. They thought that he was retarding and hindering his fellow Christians throughout the whole kingdom. The Dissenters' attitude towards the question was something like this: The right to worship God is an original and inherent

1. Ibid, p. 177

right and all pretended rights that make this impossible are usurpations. All toleration, they claimed, is a matter of law: for example, the Revolution Settlement was a law and all the past struggles of the Congregationalists since the days of Cromwell had been to secure the repeal of bad laws. They asked Alexander, How can this state of things be overthrown except by an Act of Parliament? Alexander's request that the problem was to be worked out by a moral means is not very practical, and appeared to be a position whereby he thought he would be making a compromise for both sides.

C. Alexander and the Roman Catholic Church

Since Alexander was a very ardent believer and supporter of Congregational principles it seemed natural for him to defend these ideas against the Anglo-Catholics as we have just noted, and to be equally outspoken against the Roman Catholics.

The Protestant-Roman Catholic problem during the middle of the nineteenth century was not unlike the controversy of these two churches today. As long as these two Christian bodies exist there will be controversy between them. The Romans and the Independents of Protestant-

ism especially, are contrary to each other in some of the fundamental Christian beliefs. Alexander did not write a great deal on Roman Catholicism but in the three references he did make,[1] the reader has no difficulty in understanding what Alexander thinks about the Roman Catholics.

> "I would quarrel with no man because he is a Romanist, and far be it from me to deny that there have been, and still are, many adherents of this faith who belong to the 'excellent of the earth'; but as respects the system itself, I subscribe ex animo to the stern sentence of Mr. Landor - not as a piece of angry invective, but as expressing a sober and sad conviction - that 'so long as this pest exists on earth, religion will be a prostitute, civilization a starveling, and freedom a dishonoured outcaste, a maimed beggar'[2] wherever its sway extends."[3]

Some Protestants in Britain thought that the persecuting spirit of the Roman Church was no longer prevalent. Alexander did not feel this way. A course of lectures on Popery, therefore, were delivered in Edinburgh in 1851 at the request of the Scottish Reformation Society. He went into history to cite examples of the spirit of persecution in the Roman Catholic Church.

> "The Papal bishops have subsided in their persecution, but would take it up again if they had the

1. a) Persecuting Spirit of Popery, b) Protest Against Popish Claim, and c) a section in his volume, Switzerland and the Swiss Churches.
2. Landor, Imaginary Conversations, Vol. I, 2nd Edit., p. 148
3. Alexander, Switzerland and the Swiss Churches, p. 145

> opportunity. We should be on guard for the return of persecutions if the Church of Rome continues. It is characteristic of the Roman Church to persecute. The highest authorities sanction persecution of heretics. The popes themselves through their infallibility favour persecution."[1]

Alexander seems to be trying to revive fear and hatred towards the Romans in his lecture. In his concluding paragraph he is very firm in his convictions.

> "We must have no tolerance for Popery in principle or in usage. Whilst we concede equal political rights with ourselves to our Romanist fellow-citizens - whilst in the ordinary intercourse of society we treat them as equity and courtesy demand - for their system, as such, we must avow and manifest a stern, unflinching, uncompromising hostility. We must have no soft speaking regarding it - no half condemnatory, half-apologetic references to it - no calling of its errors by better names than they deserve - no casting of the cloak of a sentimental liberalism over its manifold abominations and atrocities. In a matter so serious as this, let us, above all things, have true, honest, manly speech; avoiding the extreme of a fierce bigotry on the one hand, and the extreme of a puerile and spurious charity on the other. We need violate no precept of equity - offend no feeling of decency - transgress no principle of political justice - repudiate no claim of mercy, and yet unswervingly declare war against Rome as the common enemy of the race, and train up our children to a truthful and healthy horror of its principles, its expedients, and its claim."[2]

The major claim and the primary principle of the Roman Catholic Church is that of infallibility. Alexander states it sharply in his article, A Brief Protest Against the Popish Claim of Infallibility.

1. Alexander, Persecuting Spirit of Popery with Historical Illustrations, p. 29.
2. Ibid, p. 56

> "Rome is infallible because Scripture says so; and the Scripture says so, because Rome tells us it says so; and the Scripture must be believed because Rome tells us it is divine, and Rome must be believed because she is infallible. We thus arrive at the conclusion that Rome is infallible because Rome is infallible; against which conclusion we protest as an insult to our reason. Now what are the grounds on which the Catholic is taught to build his faith? Simply and solely on the church's infallibility. Remove this, and all that is most dear to him in religion falls to the ground. The Romanist says, Christianity rests upon the infallibility of the church; and the infallibility of the church rests upon no man knows what."[1]

Alexander recorded many of his observations of the Roman Catholics in Switzerland when he visited that country during the summer of 1845. In the mountain districts of Switzerland, he noted that Roman Catholicism appeared in much the same guise as it bore before the Reformation. It was the religion of an honest, untutored, and superstitious race, who received it in all its integrity, submitted to it with undisguised sincerity[2] and regarded with horror all who called it in question. He observed that nearly all the science, all the manufactures, and all the merchandise of Switzerland were in the hands of its Protestant inhabitants, while the Roman Catholics contented themselves with the pursuit of agriculture, the wisdom of their ancestors, warlike exercises and rustic sports.[3]

1. Alexander, A Brief Protest Against the Popish Claim of Infallibility, Scottish Congregational Mag. 1847, p.276
2. Alexander, Switzerland and the Swiss Churches, p. 136
3. Ibid, p. 137

In one important respect the Roman Catholics of Switzerland were in advance of the Protestants; they were better instructed in the principles of their religion, and they had a sincerer faith in and reverence for that religion, than could be affirmed of the Protestants in regard to theirs. The Roman Catholics (Jesuits) in Switzerland at that time had several objects to which they devoted vast resources and untiring energies. These were "the entire extirpation of Protestantism, the complete triumph of Ultramontanism in the Catholic Church, the overthrow of political liberty and the appropriation by their order of the entire work of education."[1]

D. Cooperation Among the Churches

Alexander thought Congregationalists had peculiar advantages for the cultivation of Christian unity in the widest sense of the term. He said this because the Congregationalists had a sufficient regard to essentials as a solid basis on which their fellowship might rest, and yet they did not tie a man down so minutely to particular propositions and upon points which Scripture

1. Ibid, p. 142

might not have spoken very clearly, as to impose a burden upon any man's conscience or put a barrier in the way of any man's uniting himself to them.[1] He thought he spoke the truth in regard to the matter of fact when he said that their churches had always acted upon the principle of generous, liberal, Christian affection in their communions. They had tried to satisfy themselves as best they could, that those who wished to join them were followers of Christ, but they had never imposed upon them as terms of union any of those conditions on which sincere Christians had felt themselves obliged to differ.

In Alexander's church, there were men who had disagreed in many points, even of doctrine, in reference especially to differences between Arminians and Calvinists. Yet they had never felt any difficulty arising from that because their principles had that elasticity, and their methods of working had that freedom, that enabled them to agree to disagree upon points like these when they knew they were at one upon the great essential, cardinal truths of their religion.

He would say that their wisdom lay in seeking to have more and more of fellowship with Him who was the head, who by His own living spirit, would so touch and

1. Alexander, Union, Unity and Uniformity, Congregational Union, July 1866, p. 235

mould them if they lived near to Him, that being brought closer and closer to Him, they would by the divine necessity be drawn closer and closer to each other. Alexander thought there was a medium between the extremes of being too denominational or bigoted and too catholic.

> "Catholicity is good; but if catholicity induce a man to serve every cause but his own to keep the vineyards of others whilst his own remains uncared for - what can we say of it, but that, in that man's mind, it has acquired an unnatural development, and is exercising a mischievous influence. Party-feeling is good; but if party-feeling lead to self-gratulation, - to a blind attachment to our own cause, whether right or wrong - to an undue zeal for our own interest, - and to a contempt for or hatred of all others, - then does it become little better than a poison, - noxious, venomous and vile.
>
> The only course which good sense and pious feeling will justify in regard to this matter, is that of the man who conscientiously, intelligently, and openly attached to his own party, seeks, systematically, its welfare and extension, but at the same time harbours no ungenerous emotions, and will resort to no unfair measures in reference to other parties; who, whilst he does all he can for his own denomination, will at the same time rejoice in all that is good in others, and use all means for their welfare compatible with the primary duties he owes to his own section of the church."[1]

To achieve party spirit in religion, Alexander would suggest that we understand our own principles well; study the history of the church, ("If church history were more studied by Christians than it is, we should have both

1. Alexander, Party Spirit in Religion, Its Use and Its Excess, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1848, p. 379

more steadfast adherence to what is truth, and less dogmatism and bitterness in ecclesiastical controversy")[1] develop piety; and finally, combine gentleness and forbearance to truth.

Summary

Alexander, as we have seen, was a Voluntary but never went the length of denouncing State-Church Establishments. However, he did emphasise that they were serious hindrances to the Christian love and cooperation which he desired to see among churches of all denominations.

The principle of union which he advocated was that which was recognised in the New Testament, namely, mutual affection. The only bond prescribed was the bond of mutual charity. "Where there is love, no other bond is needed to preserve the unity of the Christian Church."[2] The principle of union is an idea not merely of union but unity. This can be brought about by a oneness of affection leading to a unity of purpose.

> "When we speak of unity we mean a Christian unity and no man can be a Christian who has not embraced the doctrine of Christianity. Before Christian unity is attained more piety is needed in the church.

1. Ibid, p. 384
2. Alexander, Unity of the Christian Church and the Communion of Christians, Discourse, 7th August 1842, p. 16

> Christian unity will be greatly subserved by Christians of different denominations cultivating habits of friendly intercourse and cooperation."[1]

Alexander had been inter-denominationally minded during all his pastoral days. He thought that Christians of different denominations should have religious communion with each other. He had been an ardent exponent of the exchange of pulpits among ministers of different sects.

> "Happy will it be for Christians of all denominations, when aiming on the one hand to preserve the purity and religious activity of the society of which they are members, they shall on the other stand ready to unite in fellowship and cooperation with true Christians of all denominations, and as much and as readily with those of another denomination, as with those of their own."[2]

We can conclude our remarks on Alexander as a churchman by saying he was by conviction and preference a Congregationalist. He loved the system for its liberty; for its fraternal spirit; for the scope it afforded for every variety of character and attainment to express itself in Christian service and labour. Most of all he loved it for the spiritual fellowship and the evangelistic zeal which had distinguished its origin and history. But he was the lover and the representative, the friend and the brother of all churches. Beyond the distinctions of sect and party he recognised Christ's presence and power under different forms alike of polity and creed.

1. Ibid, p. 21
2. Alexander, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, p. 181

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGIAN

For thirty-four years Alexander taught in theological schools. One of his favourite subjects was Biblical Theology. Being a Congregational theological teacher he had not the kind of aid theological teachers in Episcopalian and Presbyterian Theological Halls had in the recognised and authoritative creed or confession of their churches, the doctrines of which they were expected to expound and defend.

The independent position Alexander was in doubtless increased his sense of responsibility; and it left him free to use his own judgment as to the course and method of teaching. Early in his ministry he decided that one of the primary tasks of the minister was to teach religious truth as found in the Bible. When he began teaching theology his aim was to make his theology first and chiefly Biblical. He was not a speculative theologian. Writing to a friend he said,

> "My first effort on each point is to lead the students, by a careful examination of passages, to see what the sacred writers have really taught upon it, neither more nor less; then I endeavour to trace the doctrine historically; and finally, I examine critically how far the dogma of the church in its ultimate form as held by evangelical Christians is a true and just expression of what the sacred writers have laid down."1

1. Ross, W. L. Alexander, D.D., His Life and Work, p. 262

Alexander insisted that his students should satisfy themselves with the authenticity and divine authority of the Bible, the harmony between the revelation supplied in nature and that found in the Bible, the harmony of the Bible with itself, and the equal authority of its statements justly interpreted. He held that the Christian theologian should likewise avail himself of facts and arguments from all sources in illustration, confirmation, or defence of the doctrine of the Bible, but ought to make the elucidation and exact statement of that doctrine his primary aim.

Alexander found full scope for the exercise of the two mental processes chiefly required in the study of Biblical Theology, namely, that of a careful interpretation of the Bible, and that of educing from the passages interpreted the general truths or principles they contain. While it is true that he was a Biblical theologian rather than an ecclesiastical or dogmatic theologian, he was accustomed, when his subject required it, to discuss doctrines in their philosophical and psychological bearings as fully as in regard to their scriptural basis. He accepted the Bible as the divine revelation, comprehending within it not only those truths peculiar to itself, but also all the teachings of nature concerning

religion. He made it his primary aim to set forth in scientific form the doctrines of scripture concerning God and man in their relation to each other.[1]

Alexander was mainly on the side of the Calvinistic School of theologians. He rejected some of the characteristic dogmas of both the strict and moderate schools of Calvinistic theology.[2] Of the strict school he set aside as non-scriptural the church or catholic form of the doctrine of the Trinity, the eternal generation of the Son and Procession of the Spirit, and accepted only in a modified form the doctrine of Imputation. Of the moderate school he set aside as failing to be an adequate exhibition of the teaching of scripture, the doctrine of an indefinite or universal atonement. His suggestive reference to what he calls the "ecbatic"[3] aspect of the atonement is also proof of how carefully he sought to exhibit a doctrine more fully in harmony with all the statements of the Bible than that of either the strict Calvinistic or moderate Calvinistic school.[4]

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol.1, Preface Edited by J. Ross
2. Ibid
3. "ecbatic" - "not the main and primary design of God's work but a result accomplished simply in passing, as it were, - a collateral and incidental effect of Christ's work, not that which it was primarily purposed to secure." Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol.2, p. 130
4. Alexander, System of Blbilcal Theology, Vol.1, Preface

The main divisions of the science of Biblical Theology which Alexander follows in his System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I & II are: first Theology, or the doctrine of Scripture concerning God; second, Anthropology, or the doctrine concerning man; third, Christology or the doctrine concerning Christ; and fourth, Soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation. We shall follow these four divisions in our discussion of Alexander's theology with special emphasis or elaboration on the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Atonement.

A. Doctrine of God

Before we proceed to the special examination of the doctrine of God according to the Bible, Alexander reminds us that the Bible confirms the fact that we can never come to any full and complete definition or description of God. The Bible, in fact, offers no definition or explanation of God. We know about God only as God lets some ray of his invisible glory come forth.[1]

The Bible designates different names for God. Of these names there is one which may be regarded as the

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I, p. 20

proper and peculiar name of God, [1] the name which He has appropriated to Himself, and which He will share with no other. Of the rest some are appellative, and others are attributive or descriptive.

The proper and peculiar name of God which is now translated to us as Jehovah, implies the concentration in God of the quality of being or existence. He is unchangeable, infinite, eternal. The appellatives signify, "to be strong", "to judge", "to rule". The attributive or descriptive names of God in the Bible are the ideas; "strong","the Living God", "Supreme", "Eternal One" and " God of Hosts".[2]

By the attributes or perfections of God, Alexander means those qualities which we ascribe to God for the purpose of expressing our conceptions of His infinite essence in relation to the universe and to ourselves. These virtues of God must not be thought of as qualities superadded to His essence, because God "can receive no addition, experience no change".[3] God's endowments, therefore, are Himself - He, not His. God's attributes are not merely all in harmony, but are in reality one. As the sun illuminates,

1. Ibid, p. 25
2. Alexander, Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, p. 113
3. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p.42

warms, melts, hardens, and does many different acts at one and the same time, and by one and the same power (so far, at least, as we know) while we feel ourselves constrained to attribute to it various powers by which these different acts are accomplished; so, in trying to construe to our minds the one God in his different relations to the universe, we ascribe his diversities of operation to different perfections.[1]

> "They differ not in re, but formaliter; i.e., we think them virtually different because we have no other way of expressing or conceiving the different relations in which different things stand to the one indivisible and unchangeable Jehovah".[2]

Alexander's idea of the attributes of God is similar to Augustine's in his De Trinitate, VI, 7. Alexander prefers the scheme of classification in securing a just survey of the divine powers

> "according to the analogy of man's nature, as metaphysical and natural, or moral, the former including such perfections as belong to the divine essence, the latter such as characterise His mind and will. These are by some distinguished also as universal or special."[3]

But we must remember that while we distinguish the natural or metaphysical perfections of God from the mental and ethical, we do so only as a matter of accomodation to our

1. Alexander, Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testament, p. 73
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 45
3. Ibid, p. 54

own limited ways of thinking; but in themselves these cannot be separated. They are harmonious and equal manifestations of that one infinite essence which no man hath seen.

Let us proceed now to discuss the divine attributes of God by first studying the natural perfections of God. In the natural perfections of God viewed in relation to existence in time, we ascribe to God first, eternal existence. By this, he infers that we deny that God ever began to be - or that He can cease to be, or that He is subject to any succession of existence.[1] This concept is expressed in the Bible in Psalm 90:2; "He is from eternity to eternity". Secondly, "as God exists out of time and is above time, so He is not subject to any change through the lapse of time".[2] Or, in other words, God never advances, never recedes. He inhabits eternity. He occupies a perpetual Now. In reality, eternity and immutability are inseparable; "for that which changes must have begun to be, and may cease to be"[3]

Another natural perfection of God is His extensive existence which is called omnipresence. In the Scriptures

1. Alexander, Theology, in Encyclopedia Brittanica, 8th Edition. Vol. 21, p. 183
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 57
3. Ibid, p. 57

God's presence is spoken of as everywhere, through all space, without distinguishing His real presence from His operative presence.[1] It is difficult to state this idea of the omnipresence of God in any positive form.

> "All we can say, is (to quote from the words of Dr. Payne, Theology, i, p. 50), that 'by the omnipresence of Deity we mean, that in some manner unintelligible to us He is present in every part of space and in every moment of time.'"[2]

Space like time belongs to God, not He to it. He is indivisible and invisible.

A final natural perfection of God, he takes to be intensive existence, by which he ascribes to God Infinitude of Being. By this is understood the boundlessness and the fulness of God's essence. Incomprehensibility is also ascribed to God in His intensive existence. Alexander signifies that no one has understood or comprehended God, and no one ever can except God Himself. God also "dwells in light which in inaccessible and full of glory."[3] These then, are the natural attributes of God which he manifests simply as existing.

Now we come to the second of the divine attributes of God which are the moral perfections of God. Included are the mental as well as the ethical perfections. We

1. Alexander, Theology, Encyclopedia Brittanica, 8th Ed., Vol. 21, p. 211
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 59
3. Ibid, p. 62

shall consider the attributes of God under the dual division of Intelligence and Will.

The intelligence of God is His own self-consciousness. In the Bible the intelligence of God is spoken of as His "knowledge"; His "wisdom", His "understanding". It is

> "formally distinguishable inasmuch as His essence is immanent and absolutely necessary, whilst His intelligence is transient in so far as it passes to things without, and is not necessary in so far as it has to do with what is contingent and the object of free will."[1]

The divine intelligence considered as to its object or in respect of its compass is called Omniscience. God's knowledge is perfect.

> "By one simple and eternal act of intelligence He knows all things that are, that have been, that will be, or that by any possibility can be".[2]

Augustine illustrates God's omniscience.

> "Not after our manner does God either foresee what is future or look at what is present, or look even on what is past, but in a manner far and widely diverse from the custom of our thoughts... His knowledge does not change by variety of three times, to wit, present, past, and future, as does ours; with Him there is no mutation nor the shadow of change. Nor does His attention pass from thought to thought, but in His incorporeal vision all things He knows are present at once."[3]

Again, with the attribute of omniscience we can contemplate only in the way of negation. We can simply think

1. Ibid, p. 64
2. " p. 65
3. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, lib. XIC. 21

and affirm that there is nothing which God does not see and know. This divine omniscience is from eternity. It is as precise and minute as it is vast and all-embracing, as the Psalmist writes in Psalm 139: 1-5. The divine intelligence when considered with respect to its efficiency is commonly called His wisdom. The Bible represents God as not only wise, but as the alone wise.

Let us now consider those attributes of God which belong to the Divine Will.

> "It is the divine intelligence conceived as determining and acting. The will of God is God Himself willing; it is His desiring and tending towards good, known by His intelligence, and His turning away from evil, known also by His intelligence; it is the supreme faculty of acting and following out the knowledge of the highest good. It must ever be viewed as connected with the most perfect intelligence."[1]

God must ever will and act in accordance with His own nature. To the will of God is ascribed Omnipotence and Moral Perfection. By the Omnipotence of God is meant that He has but to will to accomplish. As the Bible says, "He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." (Psalm 33: 9) God's omnipotence is inseparable from His being. In fact, His omnipotence stands associated also with His omniscience. Since the power of God is infinite, it follows that nothing which God has made or done is so

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I, p. 73

great or excellent that it cannot be transcended by something still greater or more excellent.

> "The absolute freedom of the divine will implies not merely the absence of all extraneous power by which the divine purposes might be hindered or frustrated; it implies also perfect moral freedom, the absence of everything that could move to aught inconsistent with the moral perfection of the divine nature."[1]

Therefore, we ascribe Holiness to God, not merely moral purity but the consummate excellence[2] of God. Alexander defines more specifically the Holiness of God to include absolute truthfulness and faithfulness. He refers again to passages found in Psalm 31: 5-6; Psalm 33: 11; Romans 3: 3ff; I Corinthians 1: 9; and II Corinthians 1: 18. The holiness of God also includes the quality of goodness or benevolence in relation to His creatures. This is spoken of as the Love of God, as found in Psalm 8; John 3: 16; Romans 5: 8; and I John 4: 16. "God's love finds its adequate object only in Himself, but it flows over upon His creatures."[3] Finally, justice is ascribed to the holiness of God, and this in the Bible is often tantamount to the divine holiness and the absolute perfection of God. God's righteousness is ever associated with His goodness.

1. Ibid, p. 77
2. Alexander, Theology, Encyclopedia Brittanica, p. 207
3. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 81

Alexander passes on to consider what has been made known to us concerning the peculiar mode of the divine subsistence. He tries to collect and arrange what has been unfolded to us respecting the mode of the divine existence as contrasted with the existences with which we are familiar in the world around us. There are two points which he discusses; one is the Unity of the Divine Essence, as contrasted with the specific multiplicity of all creature existence; the other is the Trinity in the one Godhead, as contrasted with the individual unity of each created mind.

1. The Unity of God

The unity of God Alexander defines as "soleness"[1] or the idea that implies the only one of its kind. Nature fails to furnish evidence of the divine unity, and yet there is nothing in the range of man's knowledge that is opposed to this belief. It is proved by the Bible that monothesism was attested by the Mosaic history. God sustains certain relations in common to all intelligent creatures. To all men He stands in the common relation of

1. Alexander, Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, p. 77

a Creator and Governor; but to some, besides this, He stands in the relation of a reconciled Father, - a God whose character has been specially revealed to them, and of whose pardoning grace they have had experience. Hence, they are described as "His people". In this relationship Abraham and his posterity stood to Jehovah. In the New Testament as well, we find the divine unity very clearly announced.[1]

God is addressed by Jesus as the only real God and the acknowledgment of Him as such is declared to be eternal life (John 17: 3). Paul said in I Corinthians 8: 4, "We know that there is none other God but one." Again in I Corinthians 8: 6; "To us there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things, and we in Him". While the divine unity is thus pointedly and absolutely enunciated, there are passages in which it is stated in such a way as to intimate that in some sense this unity is also a plurality. We read, "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 6: 4). The only expressible idea suggested by such a statement is that while there is but one God, and while God is one in essence, there is nevertheless a distinction of some sort or other coexisting with this unity and "soleity", and

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I, p. 91

compatible with it.[1] When such a declaration is compared with the doctrine of the New Testament regarding the Godhead, we are led to infer that in all probability it contains an intimation of that mysterious fact, the Trinity, which is so clearly set forth in the Scriptures. To the consideration of this we now proceed.

2. The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is set forth in the Scriptures, although the term does not appear in the Bible.[2] Even though Alexander is a Biblical theologian and admits that the doctrine of the Trinity is not Biblical, he proceeds to prove that the doctrine although the result of human induction from statements of Scripture, is as much a part of God's teaching in His Word as are any of the doctrines He has formally enunciated there. As we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Alexander did not accept the orthodox or catholic doctrine of the Trinity because he claimed it was not Biblical. Let us look at the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Stated briefly it is this:

1. Ibid, p. 92
2. Alexander, Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, p. 84

> "One divine essence subsists in three persons; or God is one in essence but triune in persons, inasmuch as the one in essence has three hypostases or subsistences; or God is one Divine Being in three Divine Persons."[1]

For a better understanding of the doctrine Alexander thinks that four things have to be observed:

> "1) The unity of the divine essence must be distinguished from the simplicity of the divine essence. 2) In this doctrine both the term Essence and the term Person are used in a technical and modified sense. 3) That as regards their unity in the Godhead the three Persons are consubstantial (ὁμοούσιοι) equal in power and glory; in opposition to those who say that they are only of like essence (ὁμοιούσιοι) that the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Spirit to the Father and Son, and that the Father may be without the Son or the Son without the Father. 4) That as respects the distinction in the one Godhead it is real and eternal, and is marked by certain properties peculiar to each Person and not communicable."[2]

He proceeds to state why he cannot accept the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, especially the distinctions in the divine essence as asserted in the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds, and by Calvin.[3] Alexander declares that the doctrine of the Trinity is unintelligible, especially the phrase, "three Divine Persons in one Godhead."

> "It is not that I cannot explain the mode of the divine subsistence as asserted in this doctrine, but that I cannot understand the statement as a statement."[4]

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p.103
2. Ibid
3. Calvin, Institutes, Book 1, C. 13, par. 2
4. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 105

His objection then is not that he cannot tell how there can be three persons in the one Godhead, but that he does not know what this assertion means; and as he can neither believe nor disbelieve what conveys to him no meaning, he is unable to accept the doctrine.[1] The second reason Alexander gives for not being able to accept this doctrine is that to him the doctrine seems in some parts to involve a direct contradiction of terms, and therefore to be incapable of acceptance.[2] He does not hold the objection of the Unitarians who say that the doctrine requires us to believe that three are one and one is three. He objects to the statement which says:

> "The Son as Son and the Spirit as Spirit are in the true and proper sense God, the equal of the Father, consubstantial and coeternal with Him; and yet the Son is begotten by the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. These statements seem to me to contradict each other. If the Son is the same in substance and the equal in power and dignity with the Father, how can He be the Son? How can He be begotten? Must not He that begets be before Him who is begotten of Him? And if the Father is before the Son, how can they be coeternal or co-equal? So also, if the Spirit, as respects His essence, proceeds from the Father and the Son, then as He who proceeds must be posterior and inferior to him from whom he proceeds, as he who is sent must be inferior to him who sends, the Spirit cannot be in essence the equal of the Father and Son.

1. Alexander, Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, p. 111
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 106

> But the form in which the Bible presents the subject to me is not that embodied in the creeds of Nicea and Athanasius. What I gather from it is, that there are three manifestations of God in relation to the created universe and the work of human redemption, described severally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that these three manifestations of God correspond to distinctions in the Godhead for which we have no names, and of the nature of which nothing has been revealed to us; of which, in fact, beyond the simple fact of their existence, we know nothing."[1]

This way of stating the doctrine has the advantage of avoiding modalism on the one hand by asserting a real distinction in the divine nature, while on the other it keeps clear of the unintelligible and self-contradictory statements of the orthodox or catholic doctrine by simply asserting the fact of a distinction in the divine nature without pronouncing upon the kind of distinction as personal or capable of being described by any term, direct or analogical, in use among men, and by confining the distinction expressed by the words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to the economical distinctions in the divine manifestations in relation to creation and redemption.[2]

Alexander indentifies the Son of God with Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, and regards the Holy Spirit as God working in the creation of the universe, the regeneration of men, and the sanctification

1. Ibid, p. 107-108
2. Alexander, Spiritual Gifts, Kitto's Cyclopaedia, 3rd Edition, Vol. 3

of believers.

We now proceed to see whether Alexander can find any intimations of this doctrine in the Bible. He begins with Genesis 1: 26; Genesis 3: 22 and Isaiah 6: 9 where the most natural and satisfactory accounts of implied plurality in God are recorded.[1] There are a number of Biblical references in the Old Testament which describe a messenger of God who speaks of Himself as being distinct from the eternal Jehovah, but who also is called God and Jehovah, and assumes to Himself the honours and the works of God. Several illustrations are: Genesis 16: 7-13; 18: 19-28; 21: 17-19; 31: 11-13; Exodus 3: 2, 4, 15; 14: 19; Judges 13: 3-23 and Zechariah 1: 12, 16.[2]

Alexander's interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity might be compared to that of the leading Biblical theologian of the twentieth century. Karl Barth advocates the view that the Persons of the Trinity are not to be regarded as Persons in the full sense of the word, but that it is to "the one single essence of God... that there also belongs what we call today the 'personality' of God." He urges that what are commonly

1. Alexander in Scottish Congregational Magazine, August 1887, p. 105
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 118

called "Persons" would better be called three "modes of existence of the one God."[1] Barth claims to be a Biblical theologian, expounding Biblical doctrine like Alexander. Yet, unlike Alexander, Barth's theology on the Trinity seems to be in flat contradiction to the Biblical evidence. The ground of Barth's assertion appears to be the conviction that the other view necessarily involves tritheism. If this be so, then it would seem that his thought is governed by considerations which are essentially rationalistic rather than Biblical. Instead of allowing the empirical evidence of the Biblical revelation to revise his idea of unity, he insists on making that evidence conform to the requirements of his a priori conception of unity.

Alexander asserts that the language used in predicting the Messiah is often such as to require a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity to make it intelligible.

> "He is called the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age (Isaiah 9: 6). He is identified even as the suffering Messiah with Jehovah (Zechariah 12: 9-10)... In many passages of the Old Testament the phrase 'The spirit of God' or 'of Jehovah', occurs in conjunction with certain attributes, qualities, and acts which lead to the conclusion that by that phrase is designated a divine being. Thus we are told that the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, - the Spirit of the Lord inspired the prophets, and

1. Karl Barth, Doctrine of the Word of God, G.T. Thomson's English Translation, p. 403

> through them, by His Spirit, Jehovah of Hosts sent His words to me, - the good Spirit of God is given to instruct. . ."[1]

In the passage found in Isaiah 63: 9, 10 as well as Isaiah 48: 16, we read of an allusion to the threefold extent of the plurality of God. Turning into the New Testament, we find more distinct intimations of the doctrine of the Trinity than in the Old Testament. We discover examples of Jesus' pre-existence and His unity with God (John 10: 28, 30; John 5: 20; John 14; 17, 10; John 1: 18 and John 3: 13).[2]

Alexander also refers to the passages in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are associated on terms of equality. They are: Matthew 28: 19 and II Corinthians 13: 14. He employs these passages to show that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are beings personally distinct, and not mere manifestations of one Being. Furthermore, as Deity cannot consist merely in manifestation, but must exist also in essence, these three distinct divine manifestations point back to a threefold distinction of some sort in the one Godhead.

Alexander has proceeded in his investigation of the doctrine of the Trinity by first stating the hypothesis

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol 1, p. 118
2. Ibid, p. 126

and then setting out in the Bible by logical methods of induction to prove that hypothesis. However, he discovers that no information is given in the Bible as to the nature of the distinction of the plurality of the Godhead, nor as to the relation essentially of the beings distinguished to each other.

> "There is nothing said or intimated which should lead us to conclude that the distinction is personal; nor is anything either directly or by implication advanced concerning paternity and sonship, eternal generation, eternal procession, spiration active or passive, and such like. These phrases are purely ecclesiastical, and express theories which have been formed by speculative thinkers to explain what Scripture leaves unexplained."1

The doctrine of the Trinity is in the Bible merely for its practical bearing upon our salvation. It is not so much to teach us something about God in Himself as to tell us something about God in His relation to us.

> "As to the relation of the so-called Persons in the one Godhead to each other, it tells us nothing; as to the relation of these as manifested in the economy of grace, it tells us much. It unfolds to us the wondrous fact that God redeems fallen man to Himself by Himself through Himself. Of Him and to Him and through Him are all things, who hath reconciled us unto Himself by His Son, and brings us to Himself by His Spirit."2

It is when thus viewed that the doctrine of the Trinity becomes profitable to us for our spiritual life.

1. Ibid, p. 128
2. " p. 129

3. Divine Works of God

Our discussion of the doctrine of God concludes with the consideration of the divine works of God as manifested in Creation and Providence. That God is the Cause of all existence besides His own, the Creator of all things that are, whether subject to our senses or not, is a truth again and again enunciated in the Bible.[1] There we find that creation is invariably represented as the effect of the divine will. In answer to those who would say God brought something out of nothing, Alexander would reply that such a statement is utterly absurd, for if anything is brought out of another thing, that other thing must contain it before it is something out of it. Therefore, to speak of bringing something out of nothing is a contradiction in terms. But the Bible does not say this. It tells us that God made the world and all things in it, that He formed the earth and the heavens, that He spake and they were made, He commanded and they were created.[2] But nowhere do we find that He made all things out of nothing. The fact and not the reason for creation is simply this, that all things are of God and creation is the bringing into

1. Alexander, Christian Thought and Work, p. 190
2. Ibid, p. 191

actual existence by His will of what existed from all eternity potentially in Him.

Besides the work of creation, God reveals Himself to men in the work of Providence. The word Providence means "the agency of God in the universe of creatures, whereby the purposes of His will in relation to it and them are accomplished."[1] Providence cannot in reality be separated from God's omniscience.

God decrees what He Himself does, and He does what He decrees. Of course, many things happen which are not directly caused by God. These things, therefore, He has not decreed. But as He knew they would happen, He has purposed that they shall happen, else He would have prevented them. They are thus parts in that great scheme on which He has willed that the universe should be regulated. He will see to it that they happen as He has purposed. This for Alexander is God's Providence.[2]

It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that as the world has come into existence by the divine will and continues its existence by the divine will, its conservation is virtually a continuous creation, so that there is the same reason for believing that God pro-

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 134
2. " Christian Thought and Work, p. 161

videntially cares for the world as for believing that He created it at first.

Another reason for believing in Providence is that "as God could not create the universe without having an end or design in so doing, we cannot conceive that He would cease to watch over the universe in all its parts so as to prevent that end being frustrated or come short of."[1] Again, when we see the world not only continuing to exist, but to exist in order, and to fulfil from generation to generation its great purposes, we cannot resist the conclusion that a superintending mind and controlling hand preside over it.

The idea of Providence is carried directly over into the natural experiences of men. History cannot be rightly viewed unless it is viewed as a revelation of God.[2] When we turn from natural reasons for a demonstration of Divine Providence to the Scriptures,

> "we find the truth asserted there in the fullest and firmest manner. Not only are we told in general that the Lord reigneth, that He doeth His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, that He preserveth man and beast, that by Him all things consist, but statements of the most specific kind pervade Scripture as to God's providential care and government of the universe."[3]

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 138
2. " Scottish Congregational Magazine, Jan. 1866
3. " System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 141

While God's providential care extends to all, there is a sense in which some are the objects of His most special care. This is only what reason justifies.

> "For the holy and ever-blessed God cannot but stand in a different relation to the good and pious on the one hand, and the ungodly and wicked on the other; and when He has graciously brought men into a relation of sonship with Himself, it would be unreasonable to suppose that those thus privileged are no more the objects of His care than are those who are alienated from Him and enemies to Him."[1]

Alexander does not say how the Divine Providence operates.

Man is free and intelligent, but over man the government of God extends. Moral government is for moral ends - a government of men which makes their happiness depend on their obedience to a law which is just and good, and which, for this purpose, employs any means that are adapted to secure it.

> "God has placed His intelligent creatures under moral law, and He may sanction that law by attaching penalities to the breach of it."[2]

Just as there are penalties for the violation of natural law so there are penalties for the breaking of moral law. God has made known to us as free agents the moral law which is to regulate our conduct and has clearly shown us in the Bible what will ensue on obedience or disobedience to its injunctions.

1. Ibid, p. 144
2. " p. 146

B. The Doctrine of Man

The doctrine of Man divides itself into two logical parts: the origin of man and the doctrine of sin. The story of the creation of man as told in the account of Genesis 1 is Alexander's authority. Man's body is composed of the same elements as the dust of the ground.

> "Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness (Genesis 1: 26). The divine image in which and after which man was formed was thus as Dorner remarks, 'partly original endowment, partly destination.'"[1]

Man was made after the image of God as pertains to constitution and character. Being made analogous to God implies immortality.

One problem in understanding the constitution of man from the Bible is: Does it represent the nature of man as consisting of two parts or three? The answer to this question after examining the Scriptures is that man's constitution is one of being body and soul or body and spirit. Soul and spirit are used interchangeably in the Scriptures but at the same time they are not identical.

1. Ibid, p. 162. (Dorner, System of Christian Doctrine, ii, p. 78)

> "The spirit has primary and chief reference to that part of our inner nature which has to do with thought as thought, while the soul has respect rather to that part of our nature which occupies the ground common to body and mind, the region of sensation, appetite, and sensuous emotion."[1]

In the soul or spirit lies the proper personality of each man and each man has his own soul or spirit. As to the theories of the succession of souls, if one is to be adopted, Alexander would prefer the theory of succession of souls described as Creationism. This is the one most in accord with the general representation of Scripture and with the nature of the souls as immaterial and indivisible. The theory which claims that the soul is created directly by God and placed by Him in the body was held by the Roman Church as well as by many evangelical theologians.

> "Man, as he came from the hand of His Maker, was a free, intelligent, self-governing agent, capable of development, and needing experience, trial, and use in order to attain both the proper growth of his physical and mental faculties and the strengthening, maturing, and perfecting of his moral nature. Our first parents were placed in Paradise as in a school. They were surrounded by all that was necessary for their comfort and well-being, and they were brought into contact with what was calculated to develop the faculties with which they had been endowed, and fit them for the high ends for which they were originally designed. They were put upon their trial as free agents, and their final happiness was made to depend on the issues of that trial.

1. Ibid, p. 174

> Such an arrangement the wisdom and the goodness of God instituted for our first parents in their probationary state; their continuance in happiness was made to depend on their submission to one simple and most intelligible restriction; they had to refrain from the fruit of one tree, while all the others they might freely eat; and they knew beforehand what the consequences would be of their violating this restriction."[1]

The temptation and fall of man is a narrative not to be interpreted literally nor to be regarded in the other extreme as wholly parabolical and allegorical.[2] It was Satan who tempted Eve and made her question the divine goodness. The forbidden desire in Eve developed into a forbidden deed. She in turn led Adam to disobey God. This then was man's complete disobedience. The fall is likened to the analysis of evil by the writer of I John; as lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and the pride of life (I John 2: 16). If Adam had enjoyed any supernatural degree of holiness he would not have sinned or disobeyed God so easily. His penalty for disobeying God was death. Adam lost immediately and directly all the privileges of Paradise including intercourse with God.[3] This was a real penalty for Adam. To have fellowship with God was to live, and to be deprived of it was to die. Into this state of death Adam entered when he sinned; he lost

1. Ibid, p. 183-190
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, Sept. 1887
3. " System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 296

the divine favour; he became subject to evil both physical and moral.

> "Adam enjoyed Paradise and its privileges not by natural right, but under a patent of priviledge; and when he forfeited this, it was virtually cancelled, and could come into operation again in the case of any of his posterity only by a new act of the sovereign, by a new patent being made out in his favour. Less than this could not result from his act and more than this could not have been legally inflicted. What came, then, on the race of mankind in consequence of Adam's sin was simply that death which came upon himself."[1]

We come now to the doctrine of Sin. Alexander, searching the Scriptures, claims that it appears from many references in the Bible that all men are sinners. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romand 3: 23) All men know they have done wrong and blame themselves for it, and in this self-blame lies the consciousness of sin. There are certain phenomena of human conduct attesting the existence of sin in all men. The reasons are:

> "1) All men impute blame to their fellowmen for what they do that is wrong.....
> 2) The unwillingness men have to think or speak about God.....
> 3) All men act on the supposition that sin is a thing to be constantly dreaded or guarded against.....
> 4) Another fact to which we may appeal under this head is the necessity universally felt for family discipline.....
> 5) All men confess their sinfulness by adopting a religious system which is exclusively adapted to a sinner."[2]

1. Ibid, p. 307
2. Ibid, p. 207-211

What is evil? and, What is the origin of evil in the world?

> "Evil is the antithesis or negation of good, It it not something positive. In the abstract, evil is want of conformity to good; in the concrete, it is anything that is opposed to or comes short of actual good. We may satisfy ourselves, then, with a two-fold division of evil - physical and moral: the former being whatever is opposed to or less than good, in the sense of happiness; the latter whatever is opposed to or less than good in the sense of rectitude, virtue or holiness."[1]

> "The Bible, however, fully authorizes the only positive conclusions to which we can come. It tells us that God is not the author of evil in any sense; that though able to prevent it, He has nevertheless permitted it to exist; and though He has permitted it to exist, He neither directly wills it, nor regards it otherwise than with abhorrence."[2]

St. John helps us to understand the meaning of sin when he says that it is something more than evil or unloveliness. Its essence lies in its want of accordance with a law. Man's condition as a creature implies that he is under law to God, which extends to the inner motive whence actions spring, and to the actions themselves.

Theological systems are moulded according to the view taken of sin. Sin is an act of transgression.

1. Ibid, p. 216-219
2. " p. 230

We find then a failing on the part of man to perform that requirement. The chastisement is no arbitrary set of the divine administration when man sins and is punished, but rather it is a necessary and unavoidable consequence of his being a transgressor of the divine law.[1] The doctrine of redemption by atonement rests for its vindication on this view of sin. Where sin had been committed and the penalty of the law incurred, one of two things happens if the law is to be sustained; either the sinner must endure the penalty he has incurred or an atonement must be made which shall have the effect of making his forgiveness and release compatible with the claims and honour of the law.[2]

The final but very important question we need to ask in our discussion of sin is, What are the consequences of sin? Alexander has an answer. "Of the sufferings that come upon men as the direct consequences of sin, not the least are those which arise from remorse and self-condemnation."[3] The Bible leaves no room for doubt that sinful men are brought into condemnation, and subsequently under liability to punishment in a future state of being.

1. Alexander, Theology, in Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 8th Edition, p. 216
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 1, p. 242
3. Ibid, p. 313

> "We are thus under God's moral government in a state of probation, even as respects this life, and as our present life has issued in that which is to come, we are here also under probation in reference to the future. Still more distinctly is man in a state of probation for the future when he lives under the offers of the gospel."[1]

Again, after committing sin, disorder and pollution invade man's soul, and he is in a state of spiritual helplessness. He is powerless to deliver himself from guilt and depravity. Without something that shall be valid as an expiation, he feels that he cannot stand in the presence of God or expect the cancelling of his guilt so as to escape the penal consequences of sin.[2]

This final word leads us on to the doctrine of Christ, where we may find some help in resolving man's problems of sin.

C. The Doctrine of Christ

Christology or the doctrine of Christ is the scientific development of what Scripture unfolds concerning the medium of reconciliation between God and man, especially the person of the Mediator, the nature of His work, and the results of His official constitution and agency.

1. Ibid, p. 316
2. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, May 1867

1. Divinity of Jesus

In studying the doctrine of Christ we must remember that Alexander as a theologian was keenly interested in asserting that Jesus was divine. The thesis of his Congregational Lectures in London in 1840, The Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments was that Jesus was the Messiah. In these lectures, later published in a book (1841), Alexander pointed out from Scripture that we can determine a time before which the Messiah was to come, and after which we cannot look for Him.[1] In Genesis 49: 10, it is predicted that the Messiah should appear while as yet the tribe of Judah retained the power of rule and legislation. We can also ascertain the family of which the Messiah was to be born, the place and manner of his birth. (Isaiah 11: 1; Psalm 132: 11; 139: 3,4; Jeremiah 23: 5)[2]

The appellations appropriate to the Divine Being are throughout Scripture applied to the Messiah and to Jesus as the Christ. The title, Son of Man is a royal name - a name belonging to the Messiah in His glory and majesty, King of kings, and Lord of lords;

1. Alexander, Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments, p. 271
2. Alexander, Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 8th Edition, Theology, p. 208

> "and one reason, probably, why our Lord used it so frequently was to associate His claims as the Messiah with this prophetic description to indicate that though He appeared among men poor, afflicted, and despised, He was nevertheless the great King whose dominion should embrace all peoples, and last forever. This name, then, is a name of dignity and majesty... He called Himself the Son of Man by way of distinction, it is evident that it is not in the ordinary and common, but in some new and peculiar sense that He meant the name to be understood."[1]

Numerous passages of Scripture relate to the divine nature of Christ. Some of the names applied in addition to Son of Man are Son of God and Logos. In many passages of the New Testament Jesus and His disciples refer to Him as Son of God.

> "Not only is He emphatically and definitely the Son of God, but He is by Himself and others described as the 'only begotten Son of God'. Whatever else may be implied in this, there can be no question that it implies Sonship in a sense absolutely unique and exclusive. Our Lord understood His Sonship as entitling Him to stand on a footing of equality with God..."[2]

Alexander explains Logos:

> "As a word is the interpreter of the hidden invisible spirit of man, so Jesus, coming forth from the bosom of the Father, of Him whom no man hath seen at any time, has revealed Him to us."[3]

Divine attributes assigned to God are applied also to Jesus Christ. These are omnipresence, omnipotence and

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology , Vol. I, p. 350
2. Ibid, p. 347-348
3. " p. 360

omniscience. Jesus says that He has eternal existence: "Before Abraham was, or came into existence, I am." (John 8: 58) Of His encompassing power He speaks thus: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28: 18) Alexander maintains that Jesus knew too the unexpressed thoughts and feelings of men, that which no outward sign indicates: "For He Himself knew what was in man." (John 2: 25)

As Jesus allowed His disciples to ascribe to Him divine attributes, so He also allowed them to offer to Him divine honours, for example, II Corinthians 12: 8, 9. Many other references in Paul's letters include I Thessalonians 3: 11 and I Corinthians 1: 2.

Divine works such as creative power, government and judgment ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament are similar to those assigned to God in the Old Testament. Alexander's final words on the divinity of Jesus are:

> "The apostles invariably represent the humanity of our Lord as being in itself a marvellous thing. The apostles represent the sending of Christ into the world as an act of unparalleled love on the part of God to man - as a costly expression of God's benevolence towards his creatures. The apostles always speak of Christ's coming into the world as an act of unexampled condescension and love on His part. The apostles represent Christ's life on earth as becoming poor on the part of Him who had been rich, as an emptying Himself of His glory, and such like expressions. The apostles uniformly give utterance to the strongest and warmest expressions of gratitude,

> admiration, and love when they speak of what they owe to their master for His interposition on behalf of man. The sacred writers represent our Lord as speaking of the sublimest things with the ease and familiarity of one to whom such things are native. The striking religious solitude of Jesus Christ, as represented by the evangelists, is remarkable in connection with our present inquiry. Jesus Christ is represented as claiming from His followers a homage, a devotion, and a love which no being but God is entitled to claim. As the birth of Jesus was supernatural, so His exaltation after His resurrection was such as no mere creature could have received."[1]

All these considerations fall in with the assumption of our Lord's supreme divinity.

> "If Jesus Christ were a mere man, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that never was there a set of writers who more systematically or perseveringly used language calculated to deceive and mislead their readers, and that in a case where error is fatal, and to be misled is to be ruined."[2]

2. Humanity of Jesus

The humanity of Jesus is no less distinctly, though with less copiousness, asserted by the sacred writers.[3] Although the human nature of Christ was in substance the same as ours, it had its own properties and pecularities, especially its extraordinary conception. Then too, He was without sin and was endowed with all moral graces and

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I, p. 398
2. Ibid, p. 400
3. Alexander, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 8th Edit., Theology, p. 211

intellectual excellences.[1] Furthermore, the humanity of Jesus is seen from the pages of the New Testament writers, Paul, John and Matthew. It is explicitly said by the author of Hebrews that when Jesus became flesh he took on Him a nature the same as ours (Hebrews 2: 14). The two constituent parts of our nature, body and soul, and the affections and qualities of a true man are ascribed to Jesus Christ (Matthew 20: 28; Luke 24: 39; John 12: 27; Matthew 4: 6; 11: 19; Luke 2: 40, 51, 52; 19: 41; John 2: 1-10).

3. Divinity and Humanity of Jesus

In the person of Jesus there is a duality of natures, a unity of person.

> "We say, therefore, that Jesus Christ is possessed of the divine and human natures, because of Him, as subject, the properties and qualities of both are ascribed; and we say He has these in one person, because He, as the subject of these, subsists per se, and is one intelligence."[2]

The divine and human natures are united in Jesus Christ, so that he can truly be called Godman, θεανθρωπος . The union was effected by the Divine nature assuming the human into union with itself. It is not a deification, but man-becoming, an incarnation, an incorporation. "This personal

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I, p. 408
2. " The Incarnation, p. 78

union of the two natures in the one Christ is a union entirely sui generis, and cannot be compared to or illustrated by any with which we are familiar."[1]

> "To Calvin and his followers, what appeared to Luther to convey a real truth, seemed nothing more than a figure of speech. Calvin compares the union of the two natures in Christ to the union of soul and body in man; and says that, as we may say of the soul what is strictly true only of the body, and of the body what is strictly true only of the soul and of the whole man what cannot be rationally taken of either apart; so do the Scriptures speak of Christ, attributing to Him sometimes what pertains only to His humanity, at other times what pertains to His deity, and occasionally, what comprehends both natures, but does not suit either by itself; and this conjunction, he adds, of a double nature in Christ, the Scriptures so express that they sometimes communicate the two with each other. With Calvin, then, the communication of properties of which Luther made so much, was only....a rhetorical form of speech. The doctrine of Calvin seems to lead either to Apollinarianism[a] or to Doketism[b]."[2]

Luther's mode of representing the relation of the divine and human natures in Christ to each other avoids the difficulty of Calvin. Furthermore, Luther's idea is exposed to the no less serious objection that it is irreconcilable with what the New Testament so explicitly states concerning the limited and progressive intelligence

1. Alexander, Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 8th Edition, Theology, p. 211
a. Apollinarianism - supposed that in Jesus the body and soul were simply human, and that the divine nature supplied in Him the place of the spirit (πνεῦμα) or rational mind (νοῦς).
b. Doketism - believed that Christ's body was not human but a celestial substance.
2. Alexander, Ecclesia, Chapter II, The Incarnation, p. 85

of Jesus. We read on Luke 2: 52 that, "He grew in wisdom as well as in stature." But if the divine nature within Him communicated its perfection to His human nature, what need was there for His being endowed with the Spirit?[1]

Alexander examines the Scriptures and finds that

> "1. Scripture nowhere expressly teaches that two natures, the divine and the human, were united in the one person of Jesus Christ. It speaks of Him in many places as God, and ascribes to Him attributes, honours and works that belong only to God; and in other places it speaks of Him as man, and ascribes to Him what is properly characteristic of humanity. But in no case does it say that He was God and man in one person. Its teaching on this head is properly summed up in the title EMMANUEL, 'God with us', as applied to Jesus Christ; of which God-Man may be regarded as the equivalent.
>
> 2. Scripture nowhere teaches that the Logos assumed human nature into union with His own. The teaching of Scripture is uniformly to the effect that the Logos became man... I Timothy 2:25; II Corinthians 15: 47; 4: 4. Such statements justify us in believing and asserting that in Jesus Christ there was a true incarnation of God, that God became man in Him. But these passages do not seem to authorise the assertion that the divine Logos took on Him or assumed human nature into union with His own.
>
> 3. The Scriptures represent our Lord as having relinquished the being on an equality with God, and as having emptied or despoiled Himself, when He was made in the likeness of men, i.e., appeared as a man under the ordinary conditions of humanity. They depict His whole condition on earth as one of humiliation and voluntary submission to and dependence on the Father."[2]

What Jesus relinquished in order to become man

1. Ibid , p. 86
2. " p. 89

> "was not His divine nature or any of its properties, but simply the glory - the state and majesty and manifest authority - which He had before His incarnation, appears not only from His own words, when He speaks of being reinvested with that glory which He had with the Father before the world was, (John 17: 5) but also from the apostle's statement in the context, that what our Lord did not retain was the form of God and the being on an equality with God."[1]

Of this union of the divine and human nature of Jesus, Alexander says negatively that it is not an essential union as if the two natures after the manner of a chemical combination coalesced into one; nor is it as some of the ancient heretics taught, a simple apposition of the one nature to the other, such as that of objects which are mechanically agglutinated;[2] nor is it a mixing of the two so that they are confounded the one with the other; nor is it a merely mystical and moral union in virtue of which the one nature always acts in union with the other.[3]

All we can say of it is that it is a personal union; that it is real; that the two natures partake of each other so that each has in common with the other what is proper to it; "and that it is supernatural, and so to the

1.Ibid, p. 91
2.Alexander, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 8th Edition, p. 211
3.Ibid

mode of it altogether beyond our comprehension."[1]

We must remember that in speaking of the kenosis, Jesus did not change in essential properties or lay aside any of the peculiar attributes of Deity. He did not change the οὐσία, the essence and nature of God.[2] The human nature never existed apart from the divine in Christ. All through His mediatorial working He acted as God-Man.

> "The union was from the first moment of the formation of His humanity in the womb of the Virgin, and continued all through His life on earth, and continues still in His exalted state. This union will continue for ever."[3]

4. Controversy with Strauss

In the middle of the nineteenth century there was a school of theologians in Germany headed by David Friedrich Strauss, who tried to overthrow the historical authenticity and divinity of Jesus. Strauss had been a follower of the absolute idealism of Hegel, but took a right about turn which led him from Hegel to gross materialism.

1. Ibid
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol, I, p. 421
3. Ibid

Alexander, in order to combat the destructive influence of Strauss' book, The Life of Jesus Critically Worked at, wrote Christ and Christianity, in which he set out to prove the genuineness of the Gospels, the truth of the statements of Christianity contained in them and the fact that Christ and Christianity are divine. Strauss endeavoured to overthrow what Christians have been accustomed to regard as the essential foundation of their religion - the historical credibility of the narratives of Jesus' life and the miracles contained in the four Gospels. He subjects the gospel narrative to a rigid criticism, the aim of which is to show that they are either so inconsistent with each other and with contemporary history, or so incompatible with the ordinary laws of human experience, as to be unworthy of credit. Strauss contends that they cannot be received as historical, either on the hypothesis of the Evangelical Christian, who takes them as they stand, or upon that of the Rationalist, who seeks under the supernatural and the improbable a true historical basis in some ordinary fact which has been exaggerated or misrepresented by the narrator. He thus attempts to resolve the whole of the gospel narration (with the exception of an exceedingly slight residium of

historical truth, which he leaves as a basis for the rest to lean on) into pure invention.

Strauss' hypothesis includes two propositions. The one is that the gospels are not entitled to be received as containing narratives of real events; the other is that these narratives are partly mythical, partly legendary, and partly intentionally fictitious.

The agrument Alexander pursues in Christ and Christianity is one of four points:

> "In the four gospels certain things are set forth which, if true, render it indubitable that Christianity has come from above.
>
> But these things must be true from the necessity of the case, because of the impossibility of their being fabrications, if the gospels were really written by the men whose names they bear, and were received in the early churches as authentic narratives of our Lord's life and actions.
>
> These gospels were written by those to whom they are ascribed; and were universally accepted in the early churches as such.
>
> It follows that the statements they contain are true, and consequently, that the religion they introduce is divine."[1]

The course he seeks in presenting the argument for the consideration of the reader is, in the first instance, to prove the genuiness of the four gospels, and having established that, he takes up those parts which prove the

1. Alexander, Christ and Christianity, p. 4

truth of Christianity, and shows that they are true, and then, that being so, they carry with them evidence that Christianity is divine.

The advantage of such an argument as this is that it takes nothing for granted except those natural principles of belief which are assumed in all reasoning, and those fundamental truths of natural religion which are admitted by all men who are not atheists. Alexander has made good in his thesis the following positions: 1) That the gospels are genuine and entire productions of the men whose names they bear. 2) That the character which these writers ascribe to Jesus, the events they narrate respecting Him, and the discourses which they report as His, must be received as historically true; it is morally impossible for the writers to have contrived such an account, or obtained credit for it at the time, if it had been false. 3) That the Author of Christianity, therefore, must be received and reverenced as a divinely commissioned teacher, whose doctrines are a revelation to us from God. It is incredible that any man should be what Christ was, do what He did, and speak as He spoke, and yet be a mere impostor, which is the only alternative if we do not receive Him as a messenger from God.

Alexander proves beyond doubt by history and the Bible each hypothesis of Strauss to be false and unreasonable. One is more convinced than ever of the historical truth of the Gospels and the divinity of Christ after reading Christ and Christianity.

5. Mediatorial Work of Christ

We now come to the most important part of the Christology which is the mediatorial work of Christ. Alexander follows Calvin[1] here inspeaking of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King. There is also a great similarity in Alexander's Christology and that of the writer of Hebrews in the New Testament.

Alexander declares that the Scriptures abundantly testify that the great design of our Lord's appearance on earth was to reconcile man to God, to repair the breach which sin had created between the Creator and His creature, and to deliver man from the evils under which sin had brought him. He devotes a greater deal of time to the discussion of the priestly function of Christ - His sacrifice and atonement, and His intercession than he does to the prophetic and kingly office of Christ.

1. Calvin - Institutes, Book 2, Chapter 15

Man must pass through three processes[1] in order that he may be delivered from the state of evil which sin has brought him. He must first

> "be restored from that state of legal disability under which sin has brought him; in the second place, he must be delivered from the state of error and ignorance into which sin has plunged him; and thirdly, he must be placed under such a wise and salutary discipline as shall conduce to the healthy development of his spiritual faculties and capacities, so that he may ultimately fulfil the high functions for which he is destined as a redeemed sinner."[2]

Christ has been invested with the threefold office; of Priest, in which He removes from man the legal disabilities which forbid his approach to God; of Prophet, in which He disperses the ignorance that misleads men to their destruction, and teaches them that truth which saves: and of King, in which He subjects them to wise and well-ordered discipline by which they shall be best fitted for those high places to which He shall raise them.

As the high priest was the mediator between God the King of Israel and His people, so is Jesus the Mediator between God the great Moral Governor of the universe and His guilty subjects of the human race. As the Hebrew priest took on himself the sins of the people as people,

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. I, p. 426
2. Ibid, p. 426

and transferred them to the sacrificial victim, so Christ, at once the Victim and the Priest, has taken upon Him the sins of men as amenable to God's spiritual law, and has offered up Himself as a sacrifice for them. As the priest went into the apparent presence of God and offered the blood of the victim before the mercy seat or propitiatory, thereby making atonement and intercession for the people, so Christ has entered into the real presence of God, and there presented His own blood for us. As the priest obtained for the people divine favour and blessing in respect to their temporal interests, so has Christ obtained for us God's favour and blessing in respect to our spiritual interests.[1]

The apostles declared that the death of Christ accomplished in reality that which the ancient sacrifices represented symbolically, namely the taking away of sin by a substitutionary propitiation.

> "a) The death of Christ is represented as an event having an important purpose. It was not an occurrence that came to Him in the course of nature or by apparent accident; nor was it one which was merely turned to some good account, after it occurred by wise and good men; nor was it merely overruled by the Providence of God for good. It was an event by itself, voluntarily submitted to by Christ and preappointed by God for an end, and that an end of vast

1. Alexander, Discourse, The Doctrine of Christ, 1879

importance. For proof of this examine the following passages: Isaiah 53: 10; Mark 10: 45; John 10: 18; Acts 12: 23; 4: 28; I Peter 1: 20.

b) The death of Christ being a means to an end, the Scriptures teach that that end had a reference to man's benefit.

c) The death of Christ was designed to benefit men by taking away sin.

d) Christ took away sin by having it imputed to Him, and bearing the punishment due to it.

e) In accordance with this, the special benefits represented as accruing to men through Christ are redemption from sin, including both the remission of its guilt and the removal of its tyranny, through His blood, and reconciliation to God by His death."[1]

a. The Atonement

As our propitiation, Christ procures for us the favour of God, not in the sense of creating it towards us or causing it to flow forth, but in the sense of removing the obstacles which sin has placed in the way of our acceptance with the Father, by covering that sin, expiating it, atoning for it by means of sacrifice just as the high priest of old by offering sacrifice covered the sins of the people and so made propitiation.

It is through Christ's sacrifice that we are reconciled to God. Man, conscious of guilt, condemned at

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. II, p. 37

the bar of his conscience, has asked himself the question, How shall man be just before God? Wherewithal shall I approach unto the Most High? If our own heart condemns us, how shall we be acquitted by God, who is greater than our heart and knoweth all things? Deal with it as you please, the fact is incontrovertible. Man, left to the unsophisticated dictates of his own conscience refuses to believe in salvation with an atonement.[1]

What all men feel they want, the Bible tells us Jesus Christ has supplied. He offered for us a real and all-sufficient atonement when He offered up Himself. He took upon Himself not only our nature, but our sins, and He bore those sins away and made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

> "In Him and in His work all the symbolical offices of preceding dispensations found their meaning and their fulfilment. Now the real victim has been offered; the fitting sacrifice has been accepted; the Atonement has become matter of fact and of history."[2]

There are several theories of Atonement. We are concerned chiefly with the Strict Calvinist School and the Moderate Calvinist School. Alexander, however, cannot be indentified with either. He was mainly on the side of the Calvinistic School of theologians, but he was independent as a thinker and rejected some dogmas of

1. Alexander, If We Believe in God, Must We Not also Believe in Christ, p. 13
2. Ibid, p. 15

both the Strict and the Moderate Schools of Calvinistic theology.

The majority of Congregational theologians in Scotland during Alexander's time were followers of the Moderate School. This group took two principal forms. The one thought that God having of His sovereign grace determined to save a certain number of the human race, devised the atonement as the means of attaining that end. The other declared that God having in His rectoral capacity devised the atonement as a means of reconciling His mercy and His righteousness, did as a Sovereign determine to limit the universal remedy in its application to such only as it was His good pleasure to bring unto salvation. Dr. Wardlaw was the leading exponent of the Moderate School and he advocated the view that the atonement was a remedy of universal sufficiency and on that ground sought to vindicate the unconditional freeness of the Gospel.[1] While thus maintaining the universality of the atonement, Wardlaw held that it was limited in its efficiency by the purpose of God in election; a purpose effectually carried out in bestowment on the elect of the special influence of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of which they are led to accept

1. Ross, History of Congregational Independency in Scotland, p. 126

the divine offer of salvation.

Moderate Calvinism was a view which differed from that of the Calvinists holding the Westminster Confession chiefly on one point, namely, the extent of the atonement; the latter holding that the atonement was limited to the elect only, and its benefits secured to them by the bestowment of the special influence of the Spirit, while Moderate Calvinists held that the atonement was of universal sufficiency but of limited efficiency. If God in appointing Christ to the offices of priest, prophet and king appointed also those for whom He had to act, then He must have intended to save thereby certain individuals of the race, and the saving of them must have entered as an essential and integral element into the design of the atonement.[1]

The view which Wardlaw advocated was substantially the same with that advanced in his Discourses on the Socinian Controversy.[2] He rejects the view of those Strict Calvinists who place the essence of the atonement in the exact equivalence of the Saviour's sufferings with the punishment due to the sins of the elect, so that they are forgiven on the ground that their substitute actually

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. II, p. 129
2. Alexander, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, p. 288

suffered for them all (neither more nor less) than they had deserved to suffer. He advocates the doctrine that the atonement was a remedy of universal sufficiency, but that its efficiency is limited by the purpose of God in election.[1] There was in the divine mind a double object in providing that scheme; on the one hand, an object pertaining to the general administration of his government as the moral ruler of the world, and on the other hand an object of a more special kind, belonging to the distribution of his favours as a sovereign benefactor.

On the ground thus laid, the author triumphantly vindicates "the unconditional freeness of the gospel, not only without having recourse to the hypothesis of universal pardon, but whilst showing the weakness, incoherence and unscripturality of such an hypothesis."[2]

The strict Calvinists believed that atonement in itself was of infinite value, but they regarded it as limited both in design and in effect to the elect, an enduring by Christ of the very penalty which they as sinners had deserved in order to secure their deliverance. They claimed that the death of Christ was in different places of the Bible restricted to His people, His elect,

1. Wardlaw, Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, p. 468
2. Alexander, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, p. 289

His Church and His sheep; and therefore, the good purchased thereby should not be extended to those who were not of this class, to those who were reprobates, nor to those who were without. Specifically, Christ died for them whom God gave to Him to be saved (John17: 6). He laid down His life for the sheep, but all are not the sheep of Christ, all are not given to Him by God to bring to glory. Those for whom Christ laid down His life are those whom the Father loved, and whom it was His good pleasure to endow with spiritual blessings. But this love and this good pleasure of His evidently included some when others are excluded so that there must be some for whom Christ did not die.

The work of Christ was of the nature of a price paid for the release of man from penalties which he had incurred, - a price which bore a fixed and exact relation to the amount of debt which man had incurred by his sins. This idea cannot be ascribed to Calvin.[1]

Alexander had several criticisms of the Strict Calvinist School's doctrine of atonement. He asserts that while it is true that the salvation of believers is a redemption, a purchasing of them from sin and misery that

1. Alexander, System of Blbilcal Theology, Vol. 2, p. 102

they may be restored to God, it is not in accordance with the representations of Scripture or the facts of the case to make this the only or even the essential idea of the atonement.

> "The objections to this are many and apparently conclusive. You will find them stated by Dr. Wardlaw in his Theology, Vol. 2, Lecture 24.... The weightiest are a) that this view is really incompatible with a belief in the infinite value of the Saviour's propitiatory work, seeing it necessarily limits that to an equivalency with the guilt of the elect; b) that on this view it is impossible to take, in their fair and proper sense, those passages in Scripture which state that Christ was a propitiation for the sins of the world, and that He was sent 'that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish' (John 3: 16); c) that on this view the salvation of the non-elect becomes a natural impossibility, just as much so as it is for those to see for whom no eyes have been provided, or those to understand from whom God has withheld the gifts of intellect; d) on this supposition the general invitations and promises of the gospel are without an adequate basis, and seem like a mere mockery, an offer, in short, of what has not been provided."[1]

What does Alexander then have to say about the doctrine of atonement? Wherein does he agree or disagree with the Strict Calvinists and the Moderate Calvinists? Alexander introduces his doctrine of the nature of the atonement with several truths about God.

> "God as the Moral Governor of the universe, must always act in a manner perfectly consistent with Himself and with that government which is but an

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 110

> expression of Himself. This follows, as a necessary consequence, from the perfection of God. God having denounced sin as utterly abhorrent to His nature and as a transgression of His law, must ever act so as to preserve intact His consistency in this particular, i.e., so as to manifest His own abhorrence of sin... He must ever appear as hating sin, as seeking to deter His intelligent creatures from committing it, and as maintaing with inflexible rigour the prescriptions and the sanctions of His law directed against it. Hence He must not only denounce it, but punish those who commit it. While God is thus under an obligation arising from the perfection of His own nature to denounce sin, and as a ruler, to pronounce sentence of punishment on those who by sin have incurred the penalty attached to the prohibition of it, He is no less under obligation from the perfection of His nature to pity and compassionate the sinner."[1]

Too often the question of atonement, as a question in theology, has been somewhat involved in obscurity and needless complication by being treated as if it were a question properly of justice or equity. When, then, we speak of the remission of sins by God, it will tend to clearness and accuracy if we abstract from the notion of justice altogether, and instead of regarding God as a judge, regard Him as a Sovereign with whom is the prerogative of mercy.[2]

If the ground and basis of rectitude are found in the divine essence, it will follow that the character of God - that is, the combined perfections of deity as a manifest

1. Ibid, p. 166-168
2. Alexander, Discourse, The Doctrine of Christ, p. 303

personality - must form an absolutely perfect expression of moral excellence.

> "God exists in the universe as He is in Himself; the outer manifestation is the efflux and interpreter of the inner glory. What we call his attributes are not qualities assumed by Him, or capable of being severed from Him or modified in Him; they are simply partial representations to our minds of that infinite and unchanging essence which we can never fully comprehend."[1]

In the revealed character of God, then, must be found the highest standard or moral truth for all his intelligent creatures; and the supreme aim of all of them, who would excel in goodness, must be to imitate God, to act so that their characters shall resemble His.

We are commanded by the Bible to be "imitators of God" and to be holy according to the pattern or example of God; and the consummation of our regenerated being is set forth as consisting in our being made perfect in his likeness, changed into his image.[2] Even Plato assures us that the only escape from the present evil state is by assimilating ourselves to God who is absolutely and ever righteous, and whom none so much resembles as the man who becomes most righteous; and he points us to heaven as the place where alone the perfect model of a

1. Alexander, Moral Philosophy, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 8th Edition, p. 557
2. Ibid

State can be had by him who would see it, and seeing it would inhabit it.[1]

The character of God can be apprehended by us only as it is manifested to us. No man can by searching find out God. To be known by His creatures, the Infinite and Eternal must reveal Himself to them. God has so revealed Himself to us. All that He does within the sphere of the sensible universe is a revelation of Him; on all that comes from Him he stamps the impress of His name.[2] Therefore, creation in all its parts supply us with information respecting the character of God. But in addition to these the world possesses a revelation of God in which He has clothed the truth concerning Himself in written words; and this He has placed before us as the fullest, clearest and most instructive source of intelligence we can resort to on this all-important theme. "From these sources may be gathered that supreme law, conformity to which is practical rectitude."[3]

By what process does man, in point of fact, come to be acquainted with the intimations of these standards of moral decision? It may be said that it is by listening

1. Plato's Republic, Book 9, p. 592
2. Alexander, Moral Philosophy, Encylopaedia, p. 557
3. Ibid

to the lessons of experience and correcting and enlarging these by regard to the teaching of tradition and the Bible, that a thorough moral discipline may be best pursued. Each man's experience will teach him that he lives in a world of which rectitude is the law. We find in the Bible a law written which is the counterpart of the law written in the order of nature and on man's heart that completes and corrects the moral beliefs which nature, conscience and testimony have imparted into us.

The question is not, How can God be just while pardoning the guilty, but, How can He pardon the guilty so as to act worthily of Himself as the righteous Lord and Governor of the universe? Whence arose the necessity for atonement?

> "A condition which will occur to the inquirer as necessary to the deliverance of a sinner from the penal consequences of his sin, is that if adequate compensation is to be rendered to the divine government for his transgression, that can be done only through the vicarious agency of another. Natural ethics and common sense can teach us that man as a sinner can of himself offer no adequate compensation to the law which he has broken. It is clear, then, if compensation is to be rendered to God's government for man's sin, that compensation must be rendered by another; in other words, the atonement must be a vicarious one."[1]

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 174

It is in the person and work of Jesus Christ as made known to us in the Bible that we find combined the conditions of a valid atonement and the qualifications required in a sufficient Mediator. With Christ's work, intended to reconcile the exercise of mercy with righteousness, and to manifest that in receiving, pardoning and blessing sinners; on the ground of that work God acts in harmony with Himself, and effectually and fully answers that end.[1]

What is the necessity of the atonement?

> "It appears that the work of Christ answers both the great ends that require to be answered before man can be reconciled to God. By His obedience unto death He has made compensation to the law and government of God for our offences, so that it becomes consistent with the perfections of God as the righteous Lord and Moral Governor of the universe to forgive sin; and He has brought to bear upon man a mighty moral power calculated to captivate and subdue man's inner being, and to bring Him to seek restoration to God, and at the same time to desire with all His soul to be conformed to the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. Christ thus fulfils his great office as the Mediator between God and man; as the Redeemer by whom man is recovered for God, and as the Reconciler by whom earth and heaven are brought again into one."[2]

What is there in the death of Christ that it prepared to draw men to God, to induce them to forsake sin, to follow

1. Ibid, p. 175
2. Alexander, Encyclopaedia Brittanica, Theology, p. 194

after holiness, and to be eager for good works?

> "Man, conscious of sin, condemns himself; he feels that he deserves to suffer because he has transgressed a law which he ought to have obeyed, and that consequently were he to be forgiven while his guilt remained uncancelled a wrong would be done, and the moral order of the universe infringed. Even were it possible, it would be impossible to reconcile such atonement, it would be impossible to reconcile such forgiveness with the man's own mind a sense of security and satisfaction in the pardon he had received.
>
> The laws of Man's moral constitution forbid the possibility of his being really...at peace with God, unless his pardon and restoration to God be secured in such a way as his own conscience in its free action will approve. What satisfaction could a man have in pardon if he felt and knew that he ought not to have been pardoned?"[1]
>
> "The atonement, therefore, was necessary for man's own sake, for the reality of His salvation, as well as for the honour of God and the stability of His law."[2]

By means of it, salvation is brought to man on terms that meet the demands of his moral constitution, for by it it is made apparent that God is righteous to forgive sins as well as merciful and gracious.

> "Man sees that mercy comes to him in the way of righteousness, and that he can obtain grace without any injury to law."[3]

The New Testament declares that Christ appears out of pure love for man submitting to lay aside His divine glory and to bear our sins in His own body, to suffer and

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 177
2. Ibid, p. 178
3. Ibid, p. 179

to die for us as a sacrifice for sins; that thereby atonement might be made for our transgressions and we might be partakers of eternal life.

As a summary of Alexander's doctrine of atonement we shall give his answers to the three questions which we have discussed. 1) What is the nature of atonement? 2) What is the necessity of the atonement? and 3) For whom was the atonement made?

The nature of the atonement is an expedient of divine contrivance for the purpose of reconciling man to God by so compensating to the law and government of God for man's sin as to render it compatible with God's perfection to forgive the sinner and receive him into favour; and by so appealing to man's moral and spiritual affections as to overcome his native ahd habitual animosity to God, and draw him in love, penitence and submission to seek pardon from God.[1]

The reply to the question, What is the necessity of the atonement? is, that it arose partly from the perfection of the divine nature, and partly from the moral condition of man. The perfection of the divine nature rendered it impossible for God to forgive sin, except in such

1. Alexander, The Doctrine of Christ, p. 304

a way as should attest His continued hatred of sin and uphold the sanctions of His law, by which sin is denounced. The moral nature and condition of man rendered it impossible for him to be reconciled to God except by means which appeal to his intelligence, satisfy his conscience and inspire him with love of God.[1]

The answer to the third question, For whom was the atonement made? consists of two parts; 1) For whose benefit is the atonement of Christ made sufficient? and 2) For whose benefit was the atonement of Christ designed? To the former, Alexander's reply is that the atonement of Christ, being of infinite value, is adequate and sufficient for the benefit of all men, without exception. To the latter question he replies that

> "The atonement of Christ was designed and intended to benefit those only who are, by means of it, actually saved and brought to God."[1]

He agrees with Wardlaw at this point that the atonement is a remedy of universal sufficiency, but of limited efficiency. However,

> "This limitation as it is certainly actual, was also intentional and designed. The merit of Christ as the propitiation is boundless, but the actual reconciliation effected by Christ is not only partial,

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 187

> but was designed and purposed to be so...as respects the great and primary benefit, that of eternal salvation and reconciliation to God, the work of Christ was designed and intended only for the benefit of those whom the Father had given to Him. Of them and them only was He the substitute; for them and them only did He give Himself that He might redeem them as His peculiar property, a nd obtain them as His purchased possession."[1]

6. The Morisonian Controversy

The Morisonian Controversy which greatly disturbed the Congregational Churches in Scotland occurred during the period of Alexander's teaching at the Glasgow Theological Academy. He assumed a leading part in the argument, not only because he was a tutor at the Academy, but inasmuch as he held strongly pronounced views as a Calvinist. Some of the students at the Academy were dismissed because they were accused of the heresy of Arminianism. It was learned that the real source of the heretical tendencies came from ministers in churches near Glasgow, expecially from Rev. James Morison of the United Secession Church at Kilmarnock. A number of Congregational Churches in the West and North also shared in the heresy. A correspondence was accordingly entered into between Wardlaw and the other

1. Ibid

ministers in Glasgow with churches in the neighbourhood whose pastors were charged with holding the erroneous views. This ended after much anxious discussion in the Glasgow Churches withdrawing fellowship from those in Hamilton, Androssan, Bellshill, Cambuslang and Bridgeton.[1]

Alexander disagreed with Wardlaw on the method he used in trying to suppress the heretical tendencies. He claimed that only the pastors of the churches were involved in the dispute. However, the correspondence was professedly that of the churches and he thought it was absurd to suppose that such letters were in any just sense those of the church members.[2]

Morison was arraigned before the Church Courts for holding the following views: That the object of saving faith is the statement that Christ made atonement for the sins of the person invited to believe, as He made atonement for the sins of the whole world; that those to whom the gospel is preached are under no natural inability to believe, or to put away unbelief; that no person ought to be directed to pray forgrace to help him to believe, even though he were an anxious sinner; that no person's prayers could be of any avail until he believed unto

1. McCrie, The Church of Scotland, p. 180
2. Alexander, Memoirs of Wardlaw, p. 426

salvation, which believing must immediately give the knowledge that the person is saved; that repentance in the Bible means only a change of mind, and was not "godly sorrow for sin"; that justification is not pardon, but is implied in pardon; that God pardons only in His character of Father, and justifies only in the character of Judge; and that justification is the expression of the fatherly favour of God; finally, that election comes in the order of nature after the atonement.[1]

Morison was charged with publishing expressions unscriptural, unwarrantable and calculated to depreciate the atonement. Furthermore, on the subject of Original Sin it was alleged that he was not prepared to say that all men by nature are deserving of the punishment of death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, on account of Adam's sin.

The Kilmarnock Presbytery decided to suspend Morison from the ministry of the Church. The case came before the Synod in Glasgow the same year (7th June, 1841). The decision of the lower court was confirmed and Morison was cut off from the church of his fathers. He received the sentence with marked composure and made this memorable declaration:

1. H. Henderson, The Religious Controversies of Scotland, p. 184

> "Sooner shall my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, than that this decision shall prevent me from preaching the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Seeing the Supreme Court of the United Secession Church has passed sentence against me, even to suspension from the exercise of my ministry, and that on most unjust grounds, as I conceive, I protest against the decision, and I will hold myself at liberty to maintain and preach the same doctrines as if no such decision had been come to."[1]

The result of Morison's depositionwas the rise of a new denomination in Scotland, popularly known as the Morisonian Church, but properly named The Evangelical Union. It came into existence two days before the eventful Disruption of 1843.

7. Christ as King

Christ's kingly office is closely connected with His priestly office. Christ was exalted to be a King because He had finished the work which the Father had given Him as priest to do. The kingship of Christ as Mediator is to be distinguished from that sovereignty of supremacy which He has as God. As God, the kingdom is His by essential right; as Mediator, the kingdom has been given to Him by the Father. But though we thus

1. F. Ferguson, History of the Evangelical Union, p. 107

distinguish the reign of Christ as Mediator from His supremacy as divine, it is at the same time to be maintained that it is because He is God as well as man that He has been exalted to the mediatorial throne.[1]

The kingdom of Christ over which He rules is a spiritual one. According to His own emphatic declaration, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18: 36) It may be in the world, or include the world, but it is not of the world.[2] The kingdom has its sphere in the inner nature of man. It is the rule of truth, righteousness and love over the hearts and minds of men.

It was by no happy accident and by no plan of men that His Church was at first founded. Jesus was exalted and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost and shed forth mighty influence by which men were converted and brought to acknowledge Him whom the Jews crucified to be both Lord and Christ. Consequently, His kingdom had its first great beginning in our world (Acts 2: 33-36). It is by the same power still that it is continued and advanced. Only those whom Christ by His Word and Spirit calls to Himself and draws out of the world, only those who are partakers of the heavenly calling, who are called

1. Alexander, Pamphlet, Can We Do Without Christ?
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 209

of God unto His kingdom, become subjects of His kingdom and enter on the enjoyment of its privileges.[1]

> "Men it is true, must of their own will and choice enter this kingdom; Christ gathers men into His kingdom not otherwise than by inviting and inducing them to come; still, it is only as He by His Word and Spirit draws them to Himself that any will seek or find access to His kingdom. To all who are His subjects, Christ may say as He said to His disciples of old, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'"[2]

Christ is now upon His throne. "When He comes the second time, it will be to consummate, not to commence His reign, to wind up the affairs of His empire, and as Judge of all, to settle the final destinies of the universe."[3] This shall be at the end of the world when all the purposes of His mediatorial reign shall have been accomplished, and all whom God has given to Him shall have come to Him and received from Him eternal life.

D. Soteriology or the Doctrine Concerning Salvation

The problem of the salvation of man's soul is a work given to us by God, and as He prescribes. The plan of saving sinners is not of man's device, and in availing ourselves of that plan we must follow the divine plan.

1. Alexander, Christ and Christianity, p. 257
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 206
3. Ibid, p. 211

We must work out our own salvation in God's way, or we shall not be saved at all. We must travel the

> "path which God points out, or we shall never reach it. It is also in the matter of saving the world; we must seek to convert men in God's way or we shall never convert them at all. We have a part to perform here, but it is the part of servants and not of masters."[1]

1. Nature and Conditions of Salvation

There are three things to be done if man is to be saved. First of all, the guilt of Adam's sin must be remitted to the race, and thereby man must be placed in a "salvable" state; second, the individual sinner must obtain the remission of his sins, and receive acceptance into the divine favour; and third, he must be renewed in the spirit of his mind and brought back to a moral resemblance to God and oneness with Him.[2] The first is universal pardon, the second is individual acceptance and justification, and the third is individual sanctification and spiritual redemption. The combination of these three constitutes complete salvation.

There are conditions for salvation. The first is,

1. Alexander, Salvation, in Christian Thought and Work, p. 190
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 217

> "Man's salvation must come to him from God. The purpose of it must be God's; the provisions by which it is to be attained must originate with Him; and it must be by His application that in each case these provisions take effect."[1]

This must be true because the evils under which man suffers are such as to preclude his salvation originating with himself. Not only is he unable to devise any scheme by which the problem of his salvation shall be solved, but the effect of sin is such as to deprive him of any inclination to be saved.

The second condition for salvation is that

> "in accomplishing salvation for man, the methods pursued must be such as to do no violence to the natural constitution and laws of our nature. Man cannot be saved apart from his own intelligence and will. It must be by knowledge and free choice that he enters into life, as it was by knowledge and free choice that he fell into death."[2]

2. Election

It is universally admitted that God loves the righteous with a special love, but there is the utmost difference of opinion as to the operation and manifestation of this special love, particularly as respects the relation which it bears to the personal salvation of the righteous. The Moderate

1. J. Gordon, Letter to Subscribers of 8th Edition Encyclopaedia Brittanica, p. 42
2. Ibid, p. 43

Calvinists at this point held the opinion that God by an eternal sovereign decree had predestined certain of the human race unto eternal life. He chose them for this end of His own free grace before the world began, and determined to secure to each of them in time the personal enjoyment through faith in His Son of the blessings of redemption. But this purpose and working in reference to the saved is not accompanied with any purpose or decree securing the final impenitency, and consequently the final destruction of the rest of mankind.

Let us now examine what Alexander taught concerning election and see whether he held strictly to the Moderate Calvinists's view. He believed that salvation is placed within the reach of all men to whom the gospel comes. The nature of the transaction accomplished by Christ was such that, to be of service for any, it must be sufficient and available for all.

> "What reconciles the exercise of mercy with righteousness in the forgiveness of one sin, must be sufficient to reconcile these in the forgiveness of all sin."[1]

As all men are kept from accepting the benefits of Christ's death by their wilful obduracy, it is only as God moves them to avail themselves of His propitiation that

1. Alexander, Theology, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 8th Edition, p. 214

any are saved. As God is not pleased thus to move all, the remedy, though of universal sufficiency, becomes of limited efficiency.[1] As this limitation rests on the eternal purpose and choice of God, and

> "as our Saviour could not but know as an omniscient being, who of the human race were included in that gracious purpose, He must be viewed as having had for the elect a special regard in what He did for the salvation of man, and consequently to have died for them in a sense in which He did not die for all men. If this be conceded, it seems superfluous to inquire whether the appointment of the atonement, in the order of things, preceded the purpose of God in election, or the purpose of God in election preceded the appointment of the atonement."[2]

This election of God of the believer is an eternal election; or, in other words, "God's determination to choose those whom He does choose is one from all eternity."[3] Believers stand in a peculiar and endeared relation to God. They are His special treasure, His peculiar people, a people for His possession. Compare the references in Exodus 19: 5 and Deuteronomy 7: 6 with Malachi 3: 17, Titus 2: 14 and I Peter 2: 9.[4]

This special relation into which the people of God have been brought is the result of a choice or election

1. Alexander, Sermon, Christ the Believer's Life, p. 47
2. Alexander, Theology, Encyclopaedia Britannica, p. 213
3. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 241
4. Alexander, Theology, Encyclopaedia Britannica, p. 215

of them by Him. "They are called the elect or chosen of God, an elect or chosen generation, or race, the election."[1]

> "The divine purpose in election has respect to the actual salvation of those who are its objects. This is opposed to the doctrine of those who teach, that it is only to the offer of salvation, and not to salvation itself, that men are elected; a doctrine which is not only groundless, so far as Scripture is concerned, but which is irreconcilable with many express teachings of Scripture - such as that salvation is an evidence of election and that heaven is a place prepared from eternity for the people of God. The divine election is an election of persons and not of communities."[2]

3. The Order of Salvation

The great design of Christianity is to bring men into the condition and to the privileges of the sons of God. The working of the Holy Spirit accomplishes this fact. The order of salvation, or the action of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to become sons of God proceeds by first, a calling; then regeneration, or the "implantation" of a new principle of spiritual life; next, justification, or the removal of all penal disabilities, and the placing of the individual in a right state in relation to the law and government of God; and finally, sanctification, or the removal of all moral and spiritual defilement from the

1. Ibid, p. 215
2. Alexander, Congregational Union, May 1845

individual, so that he becomes holy as God is holy and so fit to dwell in His presence for ever.[1]

We shall follow this order in our discussion of Alexander's doctrine of soteriology. A question which we must first ask ourselves is, how and by what means does he who was not a son of God become such, or how are men called to be sons of God? It was usual to answer in Alexander's time by saying, by adoption. But he said:

> "Now I cannot help thinking that this doctrine has been pressed out of very slender materials, and has but little, if anything, to support it in Scripture. It rests, almost entirely on the use of the word υἱοθεσία to describe the state into which believers are brought as children of God. But what seems to me fatal to this doctrine of adoption is that Scripture so distinctly states that men become sons of God by a new creation, by being begotten of Him, by being born again, by being born of God. Surely one who is a son by begetting and by birth cannot become a son by adoption. The only way in which men become sons of God is by regeneration."[2] (John 1: 12, 13; 3: 3; Romans 8:14)

Regeneration, then is a renewal of man in the ruling power of his mind. It is not a change of the constitution of the mind, or in any of the natural laws according to which it acts. What is changed is the spirit of the mind, the dominant tendency, and the prevailing character.

> "The change then, which is effected when men are renewed in the spirit of their mind consists in their being created after God, after His image and likeness, in righteousness and holiness of the truth. He has

1. Alexander, Discourse, Assurance of Faith, p. 314
2. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 367

> implanted in man a vital principle which gradually transforms him, so that from having borne the image of the earthly, he comes to bear the image of the heavenly. In outward appearance the man remains the same; but inwardly, in that which constitutes his proper self, he is so changed that he may be fittingly designated, 'a new creature.'"[1]

Conversion is the fruit or result of regeneration, renewal or mind-change; when the man is born again, renewed in the spirit of his mind, changed in mind and heart, he then naturally turns from what he previously loved and followed to a new course of aim and pursuit.

The third step in the order of salvation is justification. Alexander quotes Paul (II **Corinthians 5:21**; Romans 4: 6, 11; and Galatians 3: 13) who plainly states that man's offences were the reason for Christ being offered up as a sacrificial victim, and that our being justified was the cause of His being raised again.[2] Justification is an act which once done needs not to be repeated.

As an act justification imports the removal of a sentence; as a state it imports the enjoyment of a blessing.[3] Under the one aspect it means that the sinner is declared to be or is treated as righteous; under the other it implies that the sinner actually enjoys righteousness. The one is the repeal of the sentence of death; the other is the realisation of life.

1. Ibid, p. 377
2. Alexander, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, p. 324
3, Alexander, Things Above, Scottish Congregational Magazine 1866

Alexander expresses the views of Wardlaw on justification when he says that it is the opposite of a state of guilt and condemnation. Justification consists in being judicially accepted of God. We possess it on the ground of the righteousness of another placed to our account.[1]

Sins committed after justification are, upon the principles it inculcates, just as much sins as if they had been committed before justification, and must be washed away by repeated applications to the grace of God through Christ. Sin unrepented of is sin unforgiven. Sin indulged after justification acquires an additional enormity in the sight of God; and for any one to take comfort while practicing sin, from the idea that he is at peace with God, is to labour under a delusion alike dishonouring to God and pernicious to himself.[2]

We come now to the fourth step in the order of salvation - sanctification. This is the end of Christ's propitiatory work. The sanctification of believers is a necessary consequence of their faith in Christ and union with Him. A sinner is not saved by being pardoned; he is pardoned that he may be saved. He is saved when he is fully delivered from sin and made holy as God is holy.

1. Alexander, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Wardlaw, p. 287
2. Alexander, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, p. 325

When that is attained, he receives the end of his faith. Without this he cannot see God. Certain it is in the work of sanctification there is such a cooperation of the Divine Spirit and the human that the result is both man's work and God's work.[1]

Sanctification, then, is the moral renewal of man whereby he is brought back from a state of sinfulness to his state of conformity to the image of God. It is a renewal of the whole man. Furthermore,

> "the change is progressive. It is not effected all at once; and when once commenced it is its tendency to go steadily forward unto perfection."[2]

This process, though thus tending to perfection is never completed on earth. "Good works are necessary, not only as the fruits and manifestations of the actuality of sanctification in the soul",[3] but also as they are the indispensable means by which we are to work out our own salvation. They are the outgrowth and manifestation of a holy principle within; and as they proceed from this, so they react upon it, strengthening and deepening it and rendering more easy and sure its ultimate triumph over all the evil principles which sin has implanted in us.[4]

1. Alexander, System of Biblical Theology, Vol. 2, p. 441
2. Ibid, p. 431
3. Ibid, p. 456
4. Alexander, Discourse, Things Above, Scottish Congregational Magazine, January, 1866

The Christian religion is a living religion.

> "It is not enough to collect just and scriptural sentiments upon religion, then lay these up as mere articles of belief to be kept for profession or in reserve; we must have them in us as living principles of action and objects of continual and cherished contemplation... Religion is not a mere matter of intellect; it is supremely a state of the heart."[1]

The things which are above must not be so lofty that we give them only an occasional glance or even live apart from them. They must constitute our treasure on which our heart is set. They must be our life. We must be risen with Christ. It is only as a Christian is holy that he can make his light shine before men. To all who are His followers, Christ may say as he said to His disciples of old,

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

1. Ibid, p. 5

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

A pastor for half a century; a professor of theology and classical languages; an author engaged in almost constant controversial writing on many subjects; a church statesman who guided the Congregational Churches in Scotland; and a man of true family loyalty and sincere Christian piety: such a man was William Lindsay Alexander.

He never became the theologian that his colleague Ralph Wardlaw was nor as popular a preacher as his beloved professor, Thomas Chalmers. Alexander's thought was not extraordinarily original, neither was his personality dynamic. The major issues he confronted during his ministry in Edinburgh were those which we have examined in this dissertation: The Voluntary Controversy, The Tractarian Controversy, The Controversy with Strauss, and The Morisonian Controversy. All these events were discussed in his preaching from the pulpit in his church.

Preacher, Teacher and Author

The sermons which were published, except a volume entitled Sermons, were those preached for special occasions: funerals, ordinations and anniversaries. He preached several sermons on social issues like "vote-giving" and "anti slavery". But he was not engaged actively in social issues like the Rev. R. W. Dale. Alexander's chief interest in politics was ethical rather than political. This is what he says on this point:

> "The elective franchise is a privilege....to be exercised under a deep sense of responsibility. The end for which the electivefranchise is held is the good of the community. It is the duty of every elector to supply himself with a set of sound and fixed poltical principles, and deliberately, according to these principles, to make up his mind as to those measures which are for the time being under public discussion, or in process of becoming so. When an elector has arrived at a conviction that a certain line of conduct, or set of principles, is indispensable for securing the welfare of the empire, let him determine to give his support to no candidate by whom this line of conduct, or set of principles, is not openly avowed. If there is no candidate holding these principles, let the elector hold aloof, and vote not at all. He is not morally obliged to give his vote unless he can give it for the end for which he has it - the good of the country. In the case of two competitors for our votes appearing, both of whom are sound on what we conceive to be essential points, though they differ on minor points, it is the duty of the elector to vote for the better man of the two. If both candidates are wrong in essentials, it matters little how much one may be in other respects better

> than the other; neither is to be voted for. In the case of a candidate who is partially sound, or sound upon all but one or two great principles, ... the elector is to consider carefully whether the principles on which the candidate is unsound be of such a nature, or are likely to be so brought into debate in Parliament within the time for which the candidate expects to hold his seat, as to affect materially the welfare of the country. If to the best of his judgment the elector can answer this question honestly in the negative, ... the way is clear for him to give his vote; if not, then...to vote for such a candidate would be unwise and sinful."[1]

Alexander placed primary importance upon the preaching of the Word. His sermons were logical and exegetical. In the logical he took up some doctrinal or moral question, and dealt with it in a vigorous way. In the exegetical he expounded the Bible, for he believed the Bible to be the Word of God. He thought that the minister should daily improve his mind to the end that he might be a better preacher. All through his life Alexander held to this principle even sacrificing the duty of pastoral calling which he considered secondary. Furthermore, people crowded into his church both morning and evening on Sundays to hear him. We must remember that almost half of his congregation were not members of his church. Persons from all walks of life came to hear his expository sermons. Even though he was not a "visiting pastor", he was able

1. Alexander, A Few Words on the Ethics of Vote-giving..., Scottish Congregational Magazine, July 1847, p. 212-216

to have men around him in the church as associates in Christian work so that a spirit of friendship prevailed among the people, and they became a real fellowship of Christians.

A story told of the influence of Alexander's preaching is as follows:

> "Crossing the Irish Channel on one occasion, Alexander found a group of passengers gathered round one of their own countrymen who was preaching to them. Drawing near, he was surprised to find that the preacher was one of his people, and still more surprised to hear him deliver verbatim et literatim part of a sermon he himself had lately preached. At the conclusion of the service, Dr. Alexander received an explanation and a kind of apology to this effect: The man was in the habit of paying a yearly visit to his native country, and was anxious to use the opportunity in making known the Gospel to his countrymen. Unable himself to prepare an address, he got his son, a shorthand writer, to transcribe several of Dr. Alexander's sermons, Having a good memory he was able to repeat these to his Irish audiences, which he did very earnestly and with considerable effect. As the old man remarked to his pastor, the sermons had done him so much good that he had the desire that others should hear them - if only second-hand!"[1]

Not a few listeners felt that Alexander was too much of a teacher in the pulpit. It is true that he taught when he preached but that was his style. When we recall that he was a teacher for thirty-four years we can understand why he was didactic in his preaching.

1. Ross, W. Lindsay Alexander, p. 141

The enthusiasm he showed for teaching leads one to think that his first interest lay there. However, he did devote more years to preaching and the fact that he declined a number of teaching offers is evidence that his first loyalty was to the work of a preacher. He seemed to be most happy when he performed both duties in Edinburgh as a preacher at Augustine Church and a professor at the Theological Hall.

On several occasions Alexander was invited to teach in colleges in England. He was asked by New College, London in 1849 to become its Principal and Professor of Church History. At this time and twelve years later when another invitation came from the same college, Alexander took his church members into his confidence on the question of a decision. It was not without much thought and deliberation that he decided to remain with his congregation. One can only speculate as to the influence and effect upon Congregationalism Alexander would have had, had he chosen the professorial chair rather than the pulpit. He was a scholarly preacher and one can very readily assume that his influence as a full-time professor would have equalled if not surpassed the influence he had as a preacher.

At an early period in his life Alexander concluded that the primary aim of a Christian preacher was that of

expounding the Bible and teaching religious truth. When he became a professor of theology he resolved to make his instruction first and foremost Biblical. He had great skill in teaching and interpreting the Scripture and carefully educed from the passages the general truthts or principles contained therein.

Although Alexander had a short theological training, the brief period of study in Germany was very valuable since he had been well-read in the German language. His linquistic ability was a great asset to his teaching. He was responsible for training two generations of Congregational ministers. Alexander was not so popular as a teacher or preacher as Chalmers, who lectured to students who were preparing for the ministry in the Established Church and later the Free Church, and neither man was particularly original, yet both prepared men for the ministry with a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

Very early in his career, Alexander was invited to deliver the Congregational Lectures in London. These were published the following year in 1841 and a second edition was printed in 1853. Testimonies of high admiration and appreciation were received from Dr. John Brown of the Secession Church and from Sir William Hamilton. Critics commented that so far as deep interest in the

subject of the lecture and fitness for dealing with it were concerned, probably no other man in the Congregational Churches of Britain could have treated the subject of the lecture with equal ability and success.

Being a well-educated minister himself, Alexander was influential in urging all candidates for the ministry to have a university training in arts before they began their theological training. He was responsible for raising the standards of education for the training of ministers in the Congregational Churches of Scotland.

Alexander's most prolific writing as well as his most important works appeared before 1854. His Congregational Lectures published as The Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testament were widely read at a time when there were few Biblical theologians. The volume, Anglo-Catholicism Not Apostolical, published in the year of the Disruption of the Established Church in Scotland, was directed at the Tractarian Movement in England and its effect upon evangelical religion. The third significant work, Christ and Christianity was an outstanding publication which helped to combat the effect of German rationalism on Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century.

By the year 1840, Alexander's health was affected by over-work. The anxiety occasioned by his call to Highbury

College, the labour of preparing and delivering his Congregational Lectures and the attempts to meet the growing demands upon his time and energy by his rapidly increasing congregation, all proved too much for him. His physician said that Alexander was in danger of consumption. Even before this time he anticipated a short life and now he expected an early death. He began dwelling upon themes of the heavenly world in his writing and preaching. Throughout his career no subjects held a greater fascination than this one. During the latter half of his life Alexander devoted more time to editing and translating than to the writing of books. Nevertheless, he published several volumes and contributed numerous articles to the Scottish Congregational Magazine.

Churchman

Alexander was a churchman in the broadest sense of that word. In our present day terminology he would be called an ecumenical churchman. The catholic spirit shown in his discourse, The Unity of the Christian Church and the Communion of Christians,[1] and in the "strictures" on the action of the Central Board of Scottish Dissenters which

1. Supra., p. 132

accompanied it in its printed form, characterised Alexander in his relations to ministers and members of other denominations throughout his life. He was the leader among Congregational Churches in encouraging the exchange of pulpits between ministers of their own churches and those of the Established Church and the Free Church.

Although one of the most pronounced Voluntaries of his time, Alexander never went to the length of some of his friends in denunciating State Church Establishments. He was wise enough to say that while he agreed with his dissenting brethren in regarding State Churches as, in a certain sense, "sinful contrivances" it was in the same manner that he regarded

> "Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism and Methodism as sinful contrivances, not certainly as sinful in themselves, far less as implying moral turpitude on the part of those who support them, but simply as contrivances not sanctioned by the Word of God, and consequently as tending to evil rather than to good in the Church."[1]

Alexander objected to State Churches because he thought they were serious hindrances to the Christian love and co-operation which he desired to see fostered among churches of all denominations.

He was in complete sympathy with the "non-intrusion" party in the Disruption of the Established Church in 1843.

1. Alexander, The Unity of the Christian and the Communion of Christians, Preface

Dr. Thomas Chalmers, a stalwart leader of the Free Church, had in his friend, Alexander, a champion of the Free Church movement and a defender of the principles which they both held.

One of the chief attractions which the Presbyterian and Episcopalian bodies had for Alexander was their greater facility for carrying out the object of raising and maintaining a certain standard of mental and educational requirements for the ministerial office. In later years as Alexander's scholarly tastes became intensified, he was disposed to regard with less favour than in his earlier years "disestablishment" movements, on the ground that the provisions for promoting sacred learning and scholarship would be impaired by the abolition of State endowments. He strongly objected to the disestablishment of the Irish Episcopal Church on the ground that, as a body, and in proportion to its resources, its ministers had done more for sacred erudition than any of the three Established Churches in the United Kingdom.

Alexander made great contributions to Nonconformity and Congregationalism. While an ardent Independent, he saw that Congregationalism was meaningless if it separated itself from the Universal Church. To the Free Churches he brought a sense of the catholic Church which was lacking

in the nineteenth century in many places. He advocated fellowship with all churches or none at all.

We have already seen how Alexander had an even greater concern in ecclesiastical affairs in England. He took a very active part in the Tractarian Controversy because he believed that the influence and effects of the struggle touched every sect and party in the British Empire.

Alexander did not seem to object to the churches as an organisation so long as there was local autonomy for each. But he was firm in stating that the Church of Christ was not merely an institution for the comfort, enjoyment, refreshment and edification of those who were its members, but also an instrument for service in the world. Every member of that Church ought to feel the power of the great question rising within him, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The Church may have its faults, it may fail to do its duty because it is made up of fallen men, but the Church remains as a great organisation in the world inspired by the spirit of Christ.[1]

Alexander had an ecumenical vision when he said:

> "We must bring deeper thought, and more philosophic modes of research to bear upon questions of church polity. We must try to deal with principles, and not

1. Alexander, Congregational Union, June 1865

> confine ourselves to mere historical investigations of practices; we must reason upon the unchanging ideas of things and not content ourselves with finding out what particular manifestation these ideas have been made to assume at any given period of the church.
>
> The grand question of the Church of the future must be discussed upon other grounds than what have sufficed for the church of the past. To me, studying the shadows which coming events cast before them, and striving from them to guess the future, there seem the dimly-descried forms of two mighty problems fast advancing upon us. The one is: Given the purity of Christ's Church to secure its catholicity, so that whilst means shall be taken to exclude from it all who are not truly his, access to its privileges shall be free to all who live in Him and love Him. The other is: Given the liberty of individual churches to secure the orderly and harmonious action of the whole as a whole."[1]

Alexander had a zeal for spreading the good news to the peoples of the British Empire. The Gospel was the weapon used to attack the secularism of his day. He asserted that if the churches were failing, then it was because they were losing the New Testament essence which

> "consisted in the members loving one another, watching over each other with a godly jealousy, admonishing each other, comforting each other, striving together for the faith of the gospel, praying together and working together."[2]

As the leading churchman among the Scottish Congregational Churches, Alexander also left his mark upon all the denominations during the nineteenth century as one who tried to realise among all the unity of the Church of Christ.

1. Alexander, Scottish Congregational Magazine, May 1846
2. Alexander, Pastoral Visitation, Scottish Congregational Magazine, December 1846

The Theologian

A thorough criticism of Alexander's thought would involve an analysis of the whole system of the Calvinist tradition, but this is not necessary for our purpose.

Alexander did not make any significant contribution to theological thought, but substantially followed the flow of the general tradition of Scottish Calvinism of the nineteenth century. Accepting the Bible as a divine revelation, and comprehending within it not only those truths peculiar to itself, but also the teachings of nature concerning religion, Alexander made it his chief aim to set forth in scientific form the doctrines of Scripture pertaining to God in relation to man. While recognising the importance of the subjects usually treated under the head of Natural Theology, he regarded the discussion of these, and also of subjects bearing on the philosphical aspects of theology, as somewhat aside from his proper function as a teacher of Biblical Theology. Alexander as a Biblical theologian would agree with Martin Luther who said:

> "Jesus Christ the judge of all, is witness to my soul that I am conscious of having taught nothing save Christ and the commandments of God, and again, that I am not so obstinate, but that I desire to be instructed, and when I see my error, to change my opinion."[1]

1. M. Luther, Correspondence, Vol. 1, p. 282

Alexander's emphasis upon the Scriptures as the body of revealed doctrine and divine ordinances, the only true source of the knowledge of God, is certainly Calvinistic. For Alexander as well as Calvin, the Bible is a book of divine commands and the written Word is a guarantee against the distortion of truth that might come, were the truth not so authoritatively recorded. He concurs with Calvin who claimed that Scripture is a unity, made so by the fact that all and every part of it is concerned with one purpose, namely, the setting forth of the mediator Christ. If He comes to fuller expression in the New Testament, nevertheless, it is He who is presented also in the Old. There is no saving knowledge of God without Christ, and consequently He was held forth to all the elect as the one object of their faith and confidence from the very beginning of history.[1]

Although identified with the Calvinistic school of theologians, Alexander brought mental independence to the study of Scripture and fearlessly rejected some of the characteristic teachings of both the strict and moderate schools of Calvinistic theology. He appears to have been attracted by both the strict Calvinist view of the Bible and the more liberal Congregationalist inter-

1. Calvin, Institutes, II, 64

pretation, influenced by Luther and the later Protestant sects. The danger in holding the position that he does is that in emphasising the quthority of the Scriptures the Holy Spirit appears to be made independent of the Word.

Although Calvin emphasised the literal acceptance of Scripture, he associated the Holy Spirit with the written Word in such a way that it became the living truth for the individual believer. The Holy Spirit really testifies to the truth of Scripture, and does not simply act as the preparatory agent, but as the actual bearer of the truth. Word and Holy Spirit are inseparable.[1]

> "The testimony of the Spirit is superior to all reason. For as God alone is a sufficient witness of Himself in His own world, so also the Word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit... It (Scripture) is self-authenticated carrying with it its own evidence and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason.... Without this certainty, better and stronger than any human judgment, in vain will the authority of Scripture be either defended by arguments, or established by the consent of the Church or confirmed by any other supports."[2]

The source of Christian theology is the Scriptures, Alexander declares. It would be preposterous therefore, to allow any standard of doctrine to supersede or come

1. Calvin, Institutes I, 7, 5
2. Ibid, par. 4-5; 8 par. 1

into competition with the written Word. The wisest course to follow then, is to begin with the study of the Scriptures, and thereby construct a theological system from the first by the dictates of that standard by which ultimately all theological dogmas must stand or fall. This does not imply the abnegation of the claims of reason.

> "Revelation, as the only source of divine truth, must supply the quarry whence he is to draw his materials, and reason is the instrument by which alone these materials can be brought forth and compacted together so as to form an edifice of religious truth."[1]

One of the contributions which Congregationalism can render to Protestantism is that it maintains both the definiteness and objectivity of the truth revealed in God's Word in the Scriptures, and the living Word by which this truth is known to be divine revelation. Without the working of the Holy Spirit, faith may become either legalism or rationalism. The Christian faith without the Holy Scriptures becomes mere religious moralism.

In expounding theological principles, Alexander sought to give a clear and accurate answer to the question, what saith the Scripture? In discussing the doctrine of the trinity for example, he did not accept the orthodox doctrine but asserted that the form the Bible

1. Alexander, An Introductory Lecture in his course in Theology

presents is not that found in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. The three manifestations of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit correspond to distinctions in the Godhead for which we have no name, and of the nature of which nothing has been revealed. Beyond the fact of their existence, we know nothing. God working in the creation of the universe, the regeneration of men and the sanctification of believers; this is the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the trinity is in the Scriptures not so much to teach us something about God in Himself as to tell us something about God in His relation to us.

Did Alexander say, We are to believe that we are justified or pardoned, and not that we are to believe in order that we may be justified? He thinks that in regard to the question of assurance, it does not matter which of these views of the nature of faith we adopt. In either case, the problem of the believer's knowledge that he himself is saved remains untouched. The real issue is whether saving faith is an act of the mind terminating on something purely objective, be that Christ or only God's testimony concerning Christ, or an act having respect to the individual's own personal interest in Christ. This latter view was held by some of the reformers, especially of the Calvinistic order, and it

has always been a view held more or less in the churches which followed Calvin. His own doctrine on the subject is that "faith is a firm and certain cognition of the divine goodwill toward us which, founded on the truth of the gracious promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and sealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit."[1]

Alexander was always keen on asserting that Jesus was divine. The Messiahship was foretold in the Old Testament and realised in the New Testament. Alexander sounds very Pascalian at this point in his assertion that there is a sense of divine movement in history in the Hebraic-Christian tradition, and that the Bible is a book of prophecies pointing to Jesus. This truth was the theme of his work, The Connection and Harmony of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible does not expressly teach that two natures, divine and human, were united in the one person of Jesus Christ. But its teaching is "Emmanuel" - God with us. All we can say is that the union is a personal union; it is real. Jesus did not change the essence and nature of God. The human nature never existed apart from the divine in Christ. In the words of Calvin,

1. Calvin, Institutes, I. 3. 2
2. J. Macleod, Scottish Theology, p. 298

> "He who was Son of God became son of man, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For we maintain that the divinity was so conjoined with the humanity, that the entire properties of each nature remain entire, and yet the two natures constitute only one Christ."[1]

This is analogous to the compounding of body and soul in man, each of which is separate, yet when compounded form one personality.

Great emphasis is placed by Alexander upon the priestly function of Christ. The New Testament says that Christ offered Himself as a ransom and sacrifice for men.[2] Christ offered for us a real and all sufficient atonement when He offered up Himself. He took upon Himself not only our nature, but our sins, and He bore those sins away and made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Alexander declared that on our Lord's divinity the doctrine of atonement rests.

> "In examining the evidence, then, on which it is affirmed that the author of Christianity, Jesus the Christ, is a divine person, we engage in an investigation of the last importance to all to whom the Bible is addressed...the entire character and complexion of our religious system, with all its momentous interests, is suspended upon the result of the inquiry."[3]

The majority of Scottish Congregational theologians were Moderate Calvinsts and Alexander could be marked more as a

1. Calvin, Institutes, II 14. 1
2. Matthew 20: 28; I Timothy 2: 6
3. M.Stuart, Letters on the Divinity of Christ, Introduction by W. L. Alexander

Moderate Calvinists than a Strict Calvinist. On atonement, Wardlaw, for example, believed in universal sufficiency but limited efficiency. He rejected the strict view which placed the essence of the atonement in the exact equivalent of Christ's sufferings with the punishment due to the sins of the elect, so that they are forgiven on the ground that their substitute actually suffered for them all that they had deserved to suffer. For Alexander, Christ's atonement made by Christ is sufficient and adequate for all men, without exception. However, the atonement of Christ was designed and intended to benefit only those who are, by means of it, actually saved and brought to God.

On the doctrine of election Alexander held the same view as Wardlaw. Salvation is placed within the reach of all men to whom the gospel comes. But as all men are kept from accepting the benefit of Christ's death by their wilful obduracy, it is only as God moves them to avail themselves of his propitiation that any are saved. As God is not pleased to move all, the remedy of universal sufficiency becomes limited efficiency.

If we examine Calvin's idea of election we shall see wherein Alexander and he differ. Calvin said:

> "All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and according as each has been created for

> one or the other of these ends we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death."[1]

Faith is the outcome of the election, not its cause. All are elected only in Christ. We cannot find the secret of our election in ourselves, nor even in God if we look to Him apart from Christ.

> "There are two species of calling; for there is an universal call by which God through the external preaching of the Word invites all men alike, even those for whom He designs the call to be a savour of death... Besides this there is a special call, which for the most part God bestows on believers only, when by the internal illumination of the Spirit He causes the Word preached to take root in their hearts. Sometimes, however, He communicates it also to those whom He enlightens only for a time and whom afterwards in just punishment for their ingratitude, He abandons and smites with great blindness."[2]

Alexander's view of universal sufficiency, whereby salvation is placed within the reach of all men to whom the gospel comes, is more reasonable and Biblical. However, since all men are kept from accepting the benefit of Christ's death by their own wilful obduracy, it is only as God moves them to avail themselves of His propitiation that any are saved. Therefore, as God is not pleased to move all, the remedy of universal sufficiency becomes limited efficienty. Such a view of God and His salvation for man allows for both the will of man and the will of God.

1. Calvin, Institutes III 21. 5
2. Ibid, 24. 8

Alexander died just on the eve of the beginning of the revival of orthodox theology. At the close of the nineteenth century there was a forward march of historical science, the disturbance of theological thought with the appearance of the doctrine of evolution and a new interest in personality which in turn stimulated a renewed enthusiasm in the person of Christ. Alexander had obscured the person of Christ as a human being and in the present day Christology, there is a similar tendency. Professor D. M. Baillie in his recent book, God Was in Christ, says that there is a danger now of failing to give significance to the full humanity of Christ as found in the New Testament.

Alexander was indeed a theologian as well as a very deeply religious man. He was to a greater degree a Churchman but primarily a Preacher. Except when attending the University of St. Andrews, and when for a few years of serving as classical tutor at Blackburn Academy, his whole life was spent in Midlothian. He declined repeated invitations to London and elsewhere; and though once in 1857, when offered the Principalship of New College, London, he let it be known that in refusing to go he was sacrificing the ambition of a lifetime, no trace of disappointment was afterwards visible, and he lived to

be glad that he never left what he was proud to call "my native country."

Truly, the brightest light among Scottish Congregationalists of the nineteenth century, Alexander's brilliance shone not only within the Congregational Churches but also among the other Independents as well as the Free Church of Scotland and the Established Church.

It is typical of the character and faith of the man whose life and work we have studied that on his death bed he should request the last verses of the eighth chapter of Romans to be read:

> "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
>
> As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
>
> Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.
>
> For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.
>
> Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"As the life of a great man", says one writer of Italy, "is in the general composed of the history of his thoughts and his actions, that of a great writer in particular is composed solely of the history of his thoughts."[1] This remark holds strictly true of such a life as that of William Lindsay Alexander. His biography is the history of his mental efforts, whether from the pulpit, from the press or in the classroom. To give the history of his mind then - the history of his training, his studies, his opinions, his labours as a preacher and a teacher, and his publications as an author, is most effectively to write his life. To give a picture of the man and his work has been my aim, without neglecting those events which constitute the history of his life outside his church, or overlooking those minor incidents which so strikingly reveal his character.

1. A. Ranieri Vit di Leopardi, p. 28

APPENDIX

From the Scots Musical Museum originally published by James Johnson; notes and illustrations by William Stenhouse; New Edition, Volume 2, Edinburgh, 1853

Roy's Wife of Alldivaloch

I

Roy's wife of Alldivaloch!
Roy's wife of Alldivaloch!
Wat ye how she cheated me
as I came over the braes of Balloch?

II

She vow'd she swore she wad be mine
She said that she lo'ed me best of ony:
but oh the fickle faithless quean
She's taen the Carl and left her Johnie

III

O she was a canty quean;
And well cou'd she dance the highland walloch;
How happy I, had she been mine,
Or I'd been Roy of Alldivaloch!

IV

Her hair sae far, her e'en sae clear,
Her wee bit mon, so sweet and bonny;

To me she ever will be dear

Tho she's forever left her Johnie.

Alexander's Latin version of the same poem follows:

CANTILENAE SCOTTICAE LAUDATISSIMAE LATINE REDDITAE.

I

Rubri Uxor Aldivallis!

Rubri Uxor Aldivallis!

Scisne quâ decepit me

Colles cum transirem Ballis?

II

Vovit ac juravit illa

Meam semper se futuram:

Sed vae mihi! virgo levis

Istum prae me legit furem

III

Optime saltavit virgo;

Laetiorem nunquam malles;

O utinam fuisset mea,

Aut ego Ruber Aldivallis!

IV

Oculos nitentes habet,

Osque pulchrum ut Dianae

Semper mihi cara erit

Quamvis perfida Joanni.

Mr. Cromek says the words were written by Mrs. Murray, Bath. In the collections of Thomson, Urbani, etc., they are attributed to the pen of Mrs. Grant of Carron. There may be two different editions of this song, which is adapted to the old tune called "The Ruffian's Rant". "Roy's Wife" is the modern name of the air from volume 4 of The Scots Musical Museum, p. 320.

The solemn charge of Dr. Taylor of Norwich to his students:

"1. I do solemnly charge you, in the name of the God of Truth, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and before whose judgment-seat you must in no long time appear, that in all your studies of a religious nature, present or future, you do constantly, carefully, and impartially and conscientiously, attend to evidence as it is in the Holy Scripture, or in the nature of things, and in the dictates of reason, cautiously guarding against the sallies if imagination and the fallacy of ill-grounded conjecture.

2. That you admit, embrace, or assent to no principle or sentiment by me taught or advanced but only so far as it shall appear to you to be supported and justified by proper evidence from revelation or the reason of things.

3. That if, at any time hereafter, any principle or sentiment by me taught or advanced, or by you admitted or embraced, shall, upon impartial and faithful examination, appear to you to be dubious or false, you either suspect or totally reject such principle or sentiment.

4. That you keep you mind always open to evidence; that you labour to banish from your breast all prejudice, pre-

possession, and party zeal; that you study to live in peace and love with all your fellow-Christians; and that you steadily assert for yourself, and freely allow to others, the unalienable rights of judgment and conscience."[1]

1. Alexander, Theology in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 8th Edition

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